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ABSTRACT

Designed primarily for use by potential users of telecourses produced by other institutions or production houses, this guide provides fundamental information on the design, use, and management of telecourses, and describes experiences of successful telecourse users. It is noted that this guide is also applicable to radio courses, and the introduction provides background information on telecommunications media as vehicles of instruction. Defining telecourses as instructional systems with interrelated parts, the first of eight chapters discusses the distinctive features of these systems and their components, including both printed materials and other media. The second chapter provides an overview of the characteristics of telecourse students and their needs, and research on telecourse effectiveness in meeting these needs. The advantages of telecourse use presented in the third chapter range from the extension of instructional services to cost effectiveness and cooperative ventures. Modes for the delivery of instruction described in the fourth chapter are broadcast and cable television, Instructional Television Fixed Service, videocassettes and computer-managed videodiscs, and audiocassettes. Highlights of the telecourse acquisition process described in the fifth chapter include needs assessment, selection, and curriculum approval. Telecourse management concerns are addressed in the sixth chapter, including overall organization and telecourse adaptation, while the seventh chapter focuses on the role of the administrator in planning ahead, enrolling students, and promoting telecourses. The concluding chapter considers the importance of top-level administrative commitment to successful telecourse utilization. A list of 17 acronyms is included. (DJR)

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A Guide to Telecourses and Their Uses

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Contents

Foreword vii

Introduction 1
Further Clarification 1
Background 2

1 The Telecourse 5
An Instructional System 5
The Design Process 5
Needs Assessment 6
Planning 6
Telecourse Components 6
Video Programs 6
Print 9
Textbooks 9
Telecourse Study Guide 9
Study Aids 10
Faculty and Administrators' Guides 10
Correspondence Work and Examinations 11
Meetings and Conferences 11
Other Media Components 11
Audio 11
The Computer 12

2 Telecourse Students and Their Needs 13
Some Misconceptions 13
The Convenience Factor 13
The Students and Their Characteristics 14
The Telecourse Student Profile 14
Results of 1984 ITC/CPB Survey of Telecourse Students (Table) 15
Sex 16
Age 16
Ethnic Background 16
Educational Background 17
Occupation 17
Some Conclusions 17
Telecourse Flexibility and Student Needs 18
Telecourse Instructional Effectiveness: The Research 19
Student Performance 20

3 Advantages of Telecourse Use 23
Extension of Instructional Services 23
The "New Students" 24
Other Side Effects and Benefits 26
Cost 26
Going it Alone, or Sharing the Risk 27

4 Getting a Telecourse to Its Audience 29
Broadcast 29
Nonbroadcast 30
ITFS 30
Recordings 31
An Afterthought on Audio 32

5 Acquiring a Telecourse 33
Needs Assessment 33
Sources of Supply 34
The Selection Process 35
Enlisting Faculty Help 36
Preliminary Estimates 36
Evaluation 37
Content Assessment 37
The Curriculum Approval Process 38

6 Managing the Telecourse 39
Overall Organization 39
Finding Faculty for Support Instruction 40
Recruiting Them 40
Qualifications 41
Duties 41
Telecourse Adaptation 41
Preliminary Review 41
Nature of Adaptations 42
Tutorial and Counseling Duties 43
Communicating with Students 43
Written Communication 43
Personal Contact 44
Other Mediated Contacts 46
Computer Links 46
Support Instructor Compensation 47

7 The Administrator and Telecourse Management 49
Planning Ahead 49
Enrolling Students 50
Promotion 51

8 Commitment: The Yeast in the Mixture 53

Acronyms 54

Foreword

> A ***telecourse*** is much more than a course on television. It is a learning system, with each of its components—video, audio, print, other media—complementing the others and offering students a genuinely new kind of learning experience.

With this succinct and provocative definition of the telecourse concept, James J. Zigerell, author of this guide, demonstrates his ability to pinpoint central ideas and communicate them with clarity, cogency, and concern for his subject and his readers. These qualities, and Dr. Zigerell's long, wide-ranging experience with telecourses and their management, made him the ideal person to prepare this guide for educators and administrators interested in discovering how telecourses might contribute to their instructional programs.

Dr. Zigerell came to instructional television almost by accident. In the late 1950s, while he was teaching English in the City Colleges of Chicago, he was invited to present the second semester of English composition on open-circuit television. In fact, he presented the course several times for the Chicago TV College on local PTV station WTTW, Channel 11. The experience left him convinced of the effectiveness of television in instruction, even in courses that demand as much correspondence and direct exchange between instructor and student as composition.

In the mid 1960s he became dean of the Chicago TV College, one of the country's pioneer efforts in instructional television at the postsecondary level. Later on, in the mid 1970s, he became the assistant vice chancellor for faculty and instructional development in the Chicago multi-campus district. When he left the City Colleges of Chicago in 1978, he joined the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges as part-time consultant to and director of the Instructional Telecommunications Consortium, an association of community colleges and consortia that make extensive use of the media.

Dr. Zigerell has served as telecommunications consultant to numerous colleges and universities, as well as to governmental agencies in the United States and other nations. In 1983 he was awarded a fellowship in Japan's Society for the Promotion of Science and spent six weeks working with planners of the Japanese University of the Air.

He has written and lectured extensively on telecommunications and education. Recent works include ***Distance Education: An Information Age Approach to Adult Education*** (Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education at Ohio State University, 1984) and ***Telecourse Models: Expanding the Community College Community*** (Washington, DC: AACJC Publications, 1986).

Because he is so familiar with all aspects of telecourses and their uses, Dr. Zigerell knows which topics will be of greatest interest and utility to potential telecourse users. All of these topics are covered, concisely yet informatively, in this guide. His straightforward writing style helps readers quickly and easily master the basics of this subject. Readers completely unfamiliar with telecourses, as well as those wishing to refresh their understanding of basic material, will find this book a useful guide to what telecourses are; to identifying, attracting, and meeting the needs of telecourse students; and to adopting, offering, and managing telecourses for maximum instructional impact.

In publishing ***A Guide to Telecourses and Their Uses,*** the Coast Community College District, through its Office of Alternative Learning Systems and Coast Telecourses at Coastline Community College, continues a tradition of more than ten years of providing telecourses and materials to facilitate their use. We are committed to assisting educators and educational institutions by making available the most innovative and effective telecourses and by publishing works such as this guide, which make it possible for ever-larger numbers of educators to appreciate the value of telecourse instruction to their institutions and their students.

We want to see telecourse use expand beyond the hundreds of schools already offering them. This guide should help instructors and administrators discover why telecourses are worth employing and what makes a particular course worth acquiring. The more knowledge educational professionals have about the benefits of telecourses, the greater the demand for high-quality telecourses—ours and those of other producers.

We are grateful to Dr. Zigerell for allowing us to publish his work. We also wish to thank CBS Incorporated, which originally commissioned this guide, for encouraging Coast Telecourses to complete production of it. We are particularly indebted to the many users of telecourses for their interest in having a book such as this. The enthusiasm of those who have been using telecourses is the greatest testimony to the value of this unique learning system. And, in the spirit of open information exchange represented by this guide, any readers wishing to learn about the experiences others have had with telecourses can contact Coast Telecourses and we will put them in touch with telecourse users in the best position to answer their questions.

LESLIE N. PURDY

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Introduction

Do some faculty members, trustees or board members, or even students ask why your college (or university) doesn't reach more students by using new independent study methods? Do other faculty members wonder why videocassettes and videodiscs are not used to encourage independent study by on-campus students? To enrich and extend instructional and community service programs, is your institution considering telecourses?

Your administrators may ask: How will telecourses help us achieve our institutional goals? What additional resources, financial and otherwise, will telecourses require?

This guide provides fundamental information on telecourse design and use, and describes the experiences of successful telecourse users.

You may have heard unsettling reports of telecourse attempts that miscarried—reports of low enrollments, high dropout rates, uncooperative or hostile faculties. Indeed, some television- and media-based instructional projects have been expensive and embarrassing flops. You must face the fact that there is an element of risk in any venture that involves new approaches and new types of students to whom faculties are not accustomed. When the results are unrewarding, the blame, more often than not, is with the institution offering the telecourse, not the telecourse itself. If this guide helps you avoid errors others have made, it fulfills its purpose.

Further Clarification

How much do you know about telecourses and their uses? Undoubtedly, some of you are fairly well acquainted with them already. Others know next to nothing about them. This means that some of you should find something of interest in every part of this guide, while others may want to read only those parts that tell you something you do not already know.

Please keep in mind that what we say can be applied either to radio courses or television-based telecourses. However, if you are interested in radio or audio courses mainly, please do not be disappointed if we seem to focus almost exclusively on television-based instruction. It happens that some of the most exciting instructional media developments in recent years have been in video. Also, video's greater immediacy and sensory impact make it a more compelling medium for most people. Radio courses, however, have many design and organizational similarities to telecourses.

We look first at the telecourse as a system, and then turn to the elements of the system. We review briefly what the researchers tell us about telecourses and student performance. Finally, we consider the importance of effective telecourse management.

Because uses of telecourses and institutional practices vary so much, this guide does not pretend to be a how-to-do-it manual laying out the steps to be followed in every situation.

We should make something else clear at the outset. This guide is aimed only at schools interested in using and adapting telecourses produced by *other* institutions or production houses. There are now a good many telecourses in distribution. If you are interested in producing telecourses on your own, this guide is not designed to help you.

Background

Throughout the guide we urge you to make rational decisions about telecourse adoption. Some faculty members are suspicious of the rhetoric of educational "innovators." They still have vivid memories of the teaching machines and programmed texts of the 1960s and 1970s that had pretensions of leading education out of the desert and into the promised land. If you decide to adopt telecourses, reconcile yourself to the fact that, despite all proofs of their soundness and usefulness, some teachers will always regard them as just another fad in a fad-ridden profession.

Admittedly, television and radio instruction have had their ups and downs. The cause of instructional television was not aided by flamboyant promoters, who in the 1960s proclaimed that it was an educational panacea. Some faculty members remember distastefully the experiments with closed-circuit TV courses in the late 1950s and early 1960s by large state universities. Their motive—handling oversized enrollments in introductory-level courses without tying up faculty effort and time disproportionately—is defensible. But, too often the results were dismal: a camera aimed at a droning professor standing in front of a blackboard transmitted his image and voice to classrooms on campus, where hapless students sat or slouched in various stages of somnolence and inattention. This was the "talking-head" instructional television about which so many harsh things have been said and written.

Fortunately, since then instructional television has come a long way. Exciting developments have demonstrated that TV can be an important component of distance learning systems. In particular, the spectacular success of the British Open University (BOU) has changed many attitudes in the higher education community.

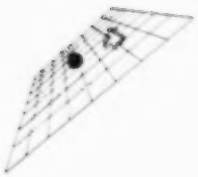
Although the BOU employs TV for only a relatively small part of its teaching system, mainly because it is expensive to produce programs of professional quality, it has demonstrated that video and audio are effective when employed for the teaching and motivational functions to which they are best suited. The BOU has become the one multimedia distance teaching model that has been imitated throughout the world. When formally chartered in 1969, it was greeted with scorn and derision by influential segments of the press and academic community. Yet, it has since demonstrated that media-assisted independent study is an acceptable alternative route to higher education for motivated adults.

Another reason for the renewed and growing interest in television and

the telecommunications media as vehicles of instruction is their vast improvement since the early 1970s in presentational skills. Please note that the video components of the telecourses discussed in this guide are not classroom lectures transferred to videotape. Rather, they are designed to exploit the distinctive properties of the video medium and the integral parts of larger and distinctive teaching systems. The telecourse is the principal contribution of the United States to the flourishing technology-based distance education movement.

Why do we use the term ***telecourse*** rather than the more straightforward ***TV*** or ***television course.*** It is not that we desire to substitute a more pretentious term for a simple one. A ***telecourse*** is much more than a course on television. It is a learning system, with each of its components—video, audio, print, other media—complementing the others and offering students a genuinely new kind of learning experience.

You may also ask if telecourses are more than educational flashes in the pan. Have they proved their usefulness and appeal, and are they here to stay? Certainly Jacob Bronowski's ***The Ascent of Man*** and Kenneth Clark's ***Civilisation*** demonstrate both the teaching and affective force of television. But are not such courses rare? The fact is, once you start looking you will find a steadily growing inventory of quality telecourses for both formal and informal instructional uses. The Public Broadcasting Service's Adult Learning Service (PBS/ALS), although in existence a relatively short time, already can boast of an impressive lineup of courses in the fine arts and humanities, history and the social sciences, business and technology, teacher education, and the health sciences. The inventory will grow as products of the CPB/Annenberg Project appear. This is the 15-year project funded by Ambassador Walter Annenberg to support the design of college-level telecourses. These courses, making up what is called the "Annenberg Collection," will be broadcast by Public Television (PTV) stations participating in PBS/ALS.



The remarkable success of PBS/ALS confirms the experience of community colleges and other institutions that there is sizable audience for telecourses. According to PBS estimates, over 100,000 men and women enrolled in ALS telecourses during the 1983-1984 school year. As many as 150,000 were expected to be enrolled in 1986-1987 in some 1,000 colleges and universities.

Moreover, colleges and universities use telecourses from distributors other than ALS; quality courses have long been available for lease or purchase from educational institutions as well as commercial publishers and distributors.

The expanding audiences provide a steadily growing market for telecourses. The demand for more educational opportunities, both on and off campus, which has increased so phenomenally since the end of World War II, shows no signs of abating. The off-campus demand in particular is likely to increase. For example, a study conducted in 1981 by the National Home Study Council, predicts that in the year 2001 distance education will be sought by people from ages 18 through 70. As mid-life career changes become common and life expectancy increases, men and women will seek both occupationally oriented and general education throughout their adult lives.

If the experience of the last decade or so is a reliable indicator, students, particularly mature and older adults, will welcome more opportunities to learn via the telecommunications media. The communications technologies surmount time, travel, and fatigue—the age-old barriers to formal adult learning.

1

The Telecourse

We have referred to the telecourse several times as a distinctive system of instruction. What is ***distinctive*** about it? How is it a ***system***?

In this section we describe telecourses that have proved their effectiveness. Colleges and universities in the United States and in Canada use them. Telecourses, you need hardly be reminded, are like professors—or textbooks. Some are better than others.

What about the distinctiveness of telecourses? They are ***distinctive*** in that they are designed to be self-contained learning units usable in a variety of institutional settings. If he or she so chooses, a student can study in complete independence and still be confident of success. To permit self-pacing and provide motivation, self-assessment and other devices are built into the courses.

Another feature that distinguishes the telecourse from other independent study methods produced for multi-institutional use is its adaptability: an institution adopting a telecourse can easily give it its own imprint by adding or modifying materials. For example, depending on what is required of the students enrolled, the same telecourse can be presented by different user institutions for fewer or more credit hours. In fact, some telecourses can even be offered at lower or upper undergraduate levels, to fit into the student's program of required courses.

An Instructional System

The telecourse is a ***system of instruction*** whose parts are interrelated and provide stimuli—print, sound, visual images—that reinforce each other. The basic elements of a telecourse are a series of video or audio programs, a student study guide, a textbook, and/or a collection of readings. To assist independent learners in making steady progress on their own, successful telecourse users often add extra elements and activities to the telecourses they lease from commercial publishers or acquire from public educational agencies.

The Design Process

Producers of the telecourses used nationwide all follow essentially the same telecourse design process. A good proportion of the telecourses now used widely are joint productions: that is, they are collaborative efforts involving several colleges and universities, or partnerships between col-

leges and cultural agencies—museums, for example, or public television stations. These partnerships pool diverse resources and evaluate instructional effectiveness before a course is adopted. The course's design is not determined by a single institution, but reflects the views of experts from several organizations. Before a course is packaged for distribution, units can be tested with students in the collaborating institutions.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The design process begins with needs assessment. Before investing the time and money required, a producer of a telecourse designed for national use tries to determine if there is a real need for it. This is done in two ways: (1) formally, through scientific audience surveys, or (2) informally, simply by projecting (from general student enrollment patterns and what we know about the characteristics and preferences of students who enroll in independent study programs specifically) what courses and curricula are likely to attract students.

PLANNING

Once a producer is satisfied that there is a need for a given telecourse, a fairly complicated process starts that may take as long as several years to complete. First, a planning team is formed, not all members of which are involved in all stages of the process.

The team's membership is usually made up as follows: an administrator-coordinator acquainted with media and their uses, an instructional designer, a TV producer/director, a cinematographer and/or film expert, script-writer(s), content specialist(s), graphic artist(s), technical personnel. Thus the team is a mixture of academic and production specialists. Naturally, academics have the final say on anything relating to content.

Telecourse Components

When they pay their money and adopt a telecourse, users get the components of the course from the distributor, to which they can add any elements they consider necessary to enrich or "localize" the course. Users must not forget that the telecourse is a multimedia system: each component should coordinate with the others in the system.

VIDEO PROGRAMS

The most "visible" element of a telecourse, and the one whose teaching function is the most misunderstood, is the video program. Until recently, telecourses produced in the United States invariably contained a substantial video portion, typically from 26 to 30 half-hour programs. (Prominent community college producers still favor this number, so that in the course of the term a student viewing a telecourse on open broadcast sees several programs a week.)

Faculty members in your institution may question why so many video programs are necessary in a three-credit-hour telecourse. There *are* effective telecourses available with fewer video programs, but user experience shows that the 26- to 30-program component performs a valuable function in pacing student progress, particularly in the lower divisions. (BOU researchers, who have investigated extensively what instructional chores can best be performed by various media, agree unanimously that video—and radio— perform the pacing function best.) And, if you have seen any well-produced video programs of widely used telecourses, you will agree that they add enrichment—and entertainment.

Another reason, having little or nothing to do with instructional effectiveness, that accounts for the still-prevailing 26 half-hour—or 13 one-hour—telecourse pattern (a reason that the academic mind may not accept happily) is that an instructional producer searching for a national market is well-advised to offer a video package that TV station managers can schedule for broadcast without doing violence to the rest of their programming. In short, program directors find it easier to schedule one or two programs a week over a 13- or 15-week period than to insert a program, say, every other week. Putting it another way: it is easier to "dedicate" program slots in advance week by week than to work with irregular intervals. Needless to say, students—and colleges—are accustomed to class sessions that "meet" at dedicated times every week of a term.

Moreover, the length of a video program is dictated by programmer needs. The half-hours or full hours of TV programs are, as you know, really shorter units: 28 minutes, 30 seconds, for example, is a typical telecourse half-hour. PBS stations do not cut away to commercials, but they do need time between programs for identification, announcements, and so forth.

After all, a student of drama soon learns that dramatic form is not always determined by purely aesthetic factors, but is dictated in part by nonaesthetic considerations such as the physical properties of the theater, the attention span and topical preferences of audiences and producers. Likewise, publishers and editors help determine the themes, shape, and length of the fiction we read. This may be small consolation to an artist or producer, but, alas, it is the reality.

Faculty hackles rise at the suggestion of "show biz" in telecourses. When discussing educational/instructional uses of television, one cannot avoid disputes over how the claims of instruction and entertainment can be reconciled or whether techniques essential to commercial broadcasts are appropriate for direct instruction.

The instructional broadcaster has to steer a careful course. The heavy-handed didactic approach of television-course producers in the 1950s and 1960s was often roundly condemned as "radio with pictures." It was derided for benumbing audiences with grim talking faces. On the other hand, nowadays some faculty members grow impatient with what they regard as frivolous, gimmicky techniques in contemporary telecourses.

Designers of today's telecourses are determined to employ the TV medium to bring new worlds and new vistas to the eyes, mind, and imagination of the student. Furthermore, for a young generation weaned on commercial television, and others who have grown up with it, inept and amateurish production is intolerable.

Yet, when evaluating telecourse video programs, especially those with high production qualities, we should never forget that ***instruction*** is the primary purpose. When mere entertainment seems to be a producer's major concern, instruction suffers. The compiler of a recent survey of telecommunications-based instructional projects in this country found that adults enrolled in telecourses "do not want to feel that they are being entertained or want to have their time wasted" (Raymond Lewis, ***Meeting Learners' Needs Through Telecommunications,*** 1983).

Professional production polish and first-rate instructional content are the hallmarks of the extensive schedule of telecourses on PBS. Understandably, PTV stations are reluctant to devote scarce airtime to programs that attract only small audiences, but programs of the quality of the telecourses acquired by the Adult Learning Service have proved they can attract and hold the attention of general audiences. A credit telecourse in the humanities may present dramatic performances by professional players; or, to explain difficult technical or scientific concepts, a course in science may contain unusual film graphics or ingenious animation.

Unfortunately, sometimes instructional TV producers commit entertainment overkill—that is, excessive showmanship is employed to achieve minor instructional effects. The talented teacher-producer, however, mixes instruction with delight in their appropriate relative proportions.

What teaching function does video best perform? British Open University investigators, as noted earlier, have concerned themselves with this question, which is of particular importance to them, since the BOU must justify spending large amounts of money to develop the video that makes up such a relatively small part of its distance teaching system. Specifically, they have attempted to sort out the teaching chores that can be handled better by TV than by face-to-face instruction or by use of the printed page. As one might expect, there are areas of disagreement. But no one denies that video dramatizations and simulations are effective instructional tools, or that TV can bring distant and exotic locations or renowned authorities directly to the student.

Walter Perry, a founder and former vice-chancellor of the BOU, defends its large expenditures for television programs on several grounds. He says thousands watch the programs and find them appealing and stimulating (just as many thousands now watch telecourse programs on public television or on cable television in the U.S.). Video programs pace students' progress. To get the most from viewing, they must—if they follow instructions in the telecourse study guide—prepare themselves beforehand. Moreover, the telecourse student's ***obligation*** to watch programs, like the conventional student's obligation to attend classes, keeps him or her going in the course. Indeed, the attrition rate is generally lower in telecourses than in old-fashioned correspondence courses.

Finally, as Perry and others point out, video programs impart a sense of community and ***togetherness*** to students who, typically, have little contact with campus life, professors, or fellow students. Watching video programs makes them feel part of a group endeavor.

To wind up this discussion of video and its uses, we might note a few things about the production style of telecourse programs. If you are review-

ing programs of an introductory-level course in the general education or nonspecialist field, expect to see the presentational and affective properties of the medium exploited. Film segments, dramatic pieces and simulations, guest interviews—all are used to promote specific learning objectives.

Characteristically, a telecourse video program will have as its pivotal figure a professor/host, real or impersonated, who will chair the program and act as a kind of instructional guide. Audiences, especially credit students, feel more secure with an authority figure in charge of the proceedings, one who appears, introduces, explains, and reappears finally to summarize, synthesize, and in general hold the programs of the series together.

PRINT

Often, faculty members and administrators who review telecourses direct their attention almost exclusively to the video programs. This preoccupation with a novel teaching element is understandable, but hardly does justice to the essential component of the learning system, the print materials.

TEXTBOOKS

A textbook is always prescribed for a college-credit telecourse. Usually, it is available through normal publishing channels. Sometimes, in high-enrollment courses an existing text is adapted by its author and publisher to coordinate with the telecourse.

Although the textbook is the basic teaching tool, many faculty members have strong feelings about specific texts. They develop willful prejudices—for and against. Some, when assigned to the position of telecourse support instructor, balk at using the prescribed textbook and yet complain about expending the time and effort to familiarize themselves with a new one.

Most adopters of telecourses choose to assign the prescribed or recommended text. But if that text is the ***only*** thing that stands in the way of adopting the telecourse, it is usually possible for support faculty to select another one. A distinctive feature of some widely used telecourses is their adaptability to institutional needs and preferences. Except in so-called interactive telecourses in specialized skill areas for nonbroadcast delivery exclusively—that is, for computers or videodiscs—producers and designers try to avoid keying a particular textbook so closely to the other course components that it becomes indispensable. To do so is to limit adaptability and, consequently, marketability.

TELECOURSE STUDY GUIDE

One print element that faculty members may find unfamiliar, and may be least prepared to evaluate, unless they have worked with other forms of independent study, is the telecourse study guide.

The study guide is a key element in the instructional method. For the distance learner it combines the functions of classroom teacher and counselor. It summarizes and synthesizes, and leads the student through the

course step-by-step. When asked to evaluate course components, telecourse students invariably rate the study guide highly.

What should you expect to find in a study guide? First, since telecourses are never impromptu performances, a study guide should clearly lay out the objectives of the entire course, as well as of each part or ***module*** (the term instructional designers favor), and prepare the student for video programs and other activities by presenting previews, overviews, and study hints. It should explain required assignments and suggest relevant optional ones. It should contain a variety of study aids: pretests, posttests, review quizzes, glossaries, suggestions for further reading.

Usually, study guides that accompany nationally used telecourses are attractive in format. In fact, some are designed and published by commercial publishing houses. They reflect the great refinements that all textbooks have undergone in recent years by employing color and layout imaginatively, containing interactive study exercises, and displaying lesson overviews prominently and colorfully.

To be effective, study guides, no matter how glossy and professional-looking, must have a highly personal, one-on-one tone. Unlike other textbooks, they can never be formal and aloof. They supply the kind of guidance, the over-the-shoulder tutelage, that a conscientious classroom teacher provides students. At their best, they represent what the distinguished European distance education theorist Börje Holmberg calls "guided didactic conversation" (a quality you should look for when evaluating study guides). As helpful and self-contained as study guides can be, they still cannot provide all the information and guidance students need. Support staff by the user institution must establish regular lines of communication with students.

STUDY AIDS

Study aids vary with telecourses and their subjects. In visual arts courses, for example, students may be provided kits of color prints or slides. Computer science telecourses may use materials that simulate "hands-on" experience for the student. For other courses, collections of readings may be prescribed to supplement the textbooks.

The British Open University even lends its students home laboratory kits for its science courses, but logistical problems preclude the distribution of home kits of this kind by small education systems without extensive warehousing facilities.

FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS' GUIDES

Some telecourse producers and distributors make special guides available to the faculty and administrators who conduct and coordinate telecourses, and even provide samples of the bulletins and other communications that are sent to telecourse students during a term. Support faculty are invited to adopt these models for their own use.

Major telecourse distributors—Dallas County Community College District, Coastline, and PBS/ALS—regard such materials as an indispensable part of their service to telecourse users. You will find them of great value.

CORRESPONDENCE WORK AND EXAMINATIONS

Most college-level courses, especially in general education subjects, require of students a certain amount of correspondence, the amount varying with the subject matter and the practices of the user institution. Exercises in the telecourse study guide are often mailed off to a local support instructor for correction and comment, as are essays, book reports, reports of observations. Scheduling and coordinating such correspondence to allow sufficient time for original mailing by the student and return by the support instructor takes planning and forethought.

Some telecourse distributors, especially the community college producers, even supply banks of objective tests with the course materials. User institutions are free to use them as they see fit, either for official testing or as student self-assessment instruments.

Study guides and faculty guides may suggest topics for essay tests. Many support instructors prefer setting their own essay topics. A common practice is for students to write "open book" examinations at home. Their essay answers are then graded by support instructors. Other instructors prefer that all students, except the handicapped or institutionalized, write essay tests on campus during midterm or final examination sessions.

MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

Telecourse designers presume that user institutions will arrange for contact between students and telecourse support instructors by scheduling orientation sessions, face-to-face sessions on campus, and telephone conferences.

OTHER MEDIA COMPONENTS

Although video is the most prominent of the media components found in widely used telecourses, it is certainly not the only nonprint device employed. The open and distance education projects around the world which are making a real impact on learning are multimedia mixes. Print remains central, but it is supplemented by combinations of video, audio, the computer, and the telephone. Telecourse designers in the United States are in the happy position of being able to select from a number of media which are accessible to and convenient for the student, controllable by the support instructor, and in some cases, with interactive capabilities. The most readily available at the moment, for economic reasons, are audio and the telephone.

Audio Audiocassettes are components of some of the telecourses now marketed nationally—courses in foreign languages and music, for example. They can also be prepared at low cost by user institutions as additional teaching supplements. Typically, telecourse students come from socioeconomic groups in which ownership of audiocassette players is not uncommon. Cassette programs or notes can be produced by user institutions at modest cost.

Surveys of multimedia open and distance education projects throughout the world show that audiocassettes are a favorite instructional medium. They enhance learning in a number of ways. For example, they

supply documentary support through interviews, conversations, or lectures. They can be used effectively for local follow-up of the video programs of a leased national telecourse—for example, a local figure discusses community implications of a national issue.

An early CPB/Annenberg Project award went to the Committee on Interinstitutional Cooperation (CIC) of the Big Ten Universities. The CIC is using the grant for audiocassettes to accompany several of the correspondence courses its members produce. The avowed purpose of the award is to fund exploration into the effects on learning and appeal to students of correspondence lessons supplemented by audio programs. The results, if favorable to audio as a medium, will certainly have an impact on future telecourse design.

The Computer As optional components, computer-based or computer-managed materials have been made available to users by a few telecourse producers. One such supplement is Miami-Dade Community College's RSVP (Response System with Variable Prescriptions). RSVP is a way of managing instruction—testing, prescribing corrective steps, recordkeeping—by utilizing computer facilities already on campus.

COSMOS

The CPB/Annenberg Project has funded a demonstration in which students enrolled in a political science telecourse (also Annenberg supported) link up with "Electronic Mailboxes" through personal computers. The hookup can be used for testing, for conferences with a support instructor, and for messages to students or instructors.

So far, telecourse designers have made relatively little use of the computer as an integral part of the media mix, except in interactive video programs designed for individualized instruction in vocational skills, where a computer manages and checks student progress. But because of its interactive capability, the computer fits into the telecourse media mix perfectly, especially in science and mathematics. Within the next few years it is likely that computer-related components will become important "add-ons" to telecourses, especially with personal computers continuing to drop in price and appearing in more and more American homes.

2

Telecourse Students and Their Needs

Some Misconceptions

In the 1970s, when establishing "open" colleges and universities was the rage in U.S. higher education, proponents argued that there are thousands of men and women, many older than students of normal college age, looking for an alternative route to higher education and further training.

Indeed, there ***are*** many such people. A rising tide of egalitarianism, demographic changes, and economic factors have fueled this demand. Today's communications technologies put education and training within the reach of adults whose busy lives and responsibilities keep them out of the conventional educational stream.

But surprisingly—or is it really so surprising, after all?—many of the students who enroll nowadays in general education telecourses are like mainstream students in their personal and their educational background and objectives. Telecourses in specialized or vocational subjects, however, attract different students, untypical in that their goals are immediate and job-related. To be more precise, the students you will attract to telecourses may not be very different from those you are used to on campus: they will be similar in their personal characteristics and aspirations to the part-time students now in your classrooms.

Above all, do not assume that all students who enroll in telecourses do so because they are unable, for one reason or another, to enroll in conventional classes. You may find that some of the students who enroll are also attending regular classes on campus.

THE CONVENIENCE FACTOR

The principal factor drawing most people to telecourses, both on- or off-campus students, is convenience. For some—men and women who work odd hours, unfortunate people confined to institutions—telecourses represent the only access to higher education. Many adults employed full-time find it much more convenient to watch programs of a telecourse in the comfort of their homes than to travel to class on a distant campus. Likewise, other employed adults already enrolled in conventional courses find it practical to earn additional credits by watching telecourse videocassettes in a college library or study center the days or evenings they are on campus and then doing the additional required work at home.

Studies of adults participating in open and distance learning projects all over the world disclose that most list distance, time, expense, and fatigue as major barriers to enrollments in conventionally taught classes. Video and audio technologies remove all these barriers except expense. Videocassette players in libraries, community centers, and work sites make formal and informal telecourse study self-paced and often more convenient. In the near future, as the cost of videocassette and videodisc equipment

and recordings continues to fall, and as cassettes become an even more popular source of home entertainment, colleges, universities, and training institutions will be lending students cassettes for home viewing, just as libraries now lend them books and audiovisual items. Educational and training cassettes and discs will become familiar items in home entertainment centers.

The Students and Their Characteristics

We have already mentioned some of the mistaken notions people have of the students who study outside the mainstream educational system, and we predicted that you may be in for a real surprise once your college or university offers telecourses. In fact, a good number of potential telecourse students may be recruited from your regular student body—that is, they will enroll concurrently in telecourses.

In 1984 The Instructional Telecommunications Consortium (ITC), a project of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, surveyed telecourse students in six states: California, Florida, Illinois, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Texas. The study was supported by a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). The ITC/CPB survey discloses that 63 percent of the students surveyed were enrolled in conventional classes at the time they were taking telecourses.

Most of the colleges involved in the study are community colleges, where large part-time enrollments are common. Thus, telecourse enrollments revealed by the survey are a reflection of general community college part-time enrollments.

What is happening, as already noted, is that part-time students are discovering that they can earn additional credits without increasing travel time or inconvenience. Undoubtedly, as telecourse use becomes more common in four-year colleges and universities, the full-time students enrolled in continuing education and extension divisions will find telecourses equally convenient and satisfying.

THE TELECOURSE STUDENT PROFILE

Before we list the features and traits making up the profile of the telecourse student, we should take the opportunity to clear up another common misconception about telecourse instruction and distance learning in general. As already suggested, in the 1960s and 1970s, some educators and public figures heralded television as a pathway to egalitarian educational ideals. The British Open University was originally named the "University of the Air" in the 1966 Labor Party White Paper that proposed it. Its founders hoped that a mass media-related institution, its doors open to all, would be a first chance for older adults deprived of formal education in their youth, and a second chance for younger dropouts.

Sadly, these dreams were not fulfilled. Neither in the United Kingdom nor the United States have those denied higher education opportunities in the past flocked in large numbers to "open learning" institutions. The BOU

Results of 1984 ITC/CPB Survey of Telecourse Students
(in rounded-off percentages)

Gender of Respondents

Female	68
Male	32

Ethnic Background of Respondents

Black	8
Caucasian	84
Hispanic	5
Oriental	2
Other	2

Highest Level of Education Completed

Did not complete high school	1
High school graduate	12
Some college	68
Associate degree	10
Bachelor's degree	7
Master's degree	2
Beyond master's degree	1

First Semester Enrolled in This College

Yes	20
No	80

Years since Last Attended School

Less than 1	69
1–5	17
6–10	6
11–20	6
Over 20	3

Currently Enrolled in On-campus Courses

Yes	63
No	37

Total Credit Hours Enrolled in This Semester

3 or less	18
4–6	25
7–9	18
10–12	18
Over 12	22

Is This Respondent's First Telecourse

Yes	64
No	36

Credit Hours Earned before by Telecourse

Zero	65
1–6	24
7–12	7
13–18	2
19-24	1
25 or over	1

Age in Years

Under 18	1
18–21	21
22–29	34
30–39	29
40–49	11
50–59	4

Marital Status

Single	35
Married	54
Divorced	11

Number of Dependents

None	45
One	18
Two	18
Three	10
Four	5
Five/more	3

Hours per Week Employed

Not employed	19
20 or less	10
20–39	18
40 or more	53

How Discovered This Telecourse

Course schedule	61
Telecourse brochure	8
Faculty advisor/counselor	6
Place of employment	3
Friend	13
Local PBS station	2
Local Cable TV	1
Newspaper advertisement	3
Other	4

Most Important Reason Enrolled in Section

Conflicts work	41
Conflicts leisure	12
Prefer at home	17
Interesting content	8
Transport problems	3
Other	19

How Intend to View Most Videos

At home	67
College library	13
Public library	1
At my work site	1
Other	1

has yet to come close to its goal of making working-class people a significant portion of its student body. In fact, recent reports from the U.K. indicate that the conservative government is exerting strong pressures on BOU officials to de-emphasize degree-directed study in favor of shorter vocationally oriented curricula that will attract blue-collar workers.

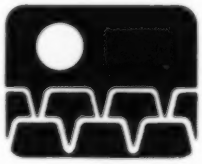
True, men and women aged 17 to 70, from every walk of life, enroll in telecourses. But their profile is not unlike that of part-time students in university extension or continuing education divisions or community college evening classes.

Sex We hear a lot about a gender gap in today's society. You may very well find one in your telecourse enrollments. Females usually outnumber males. The already-cited 1984 ITC/CPB survey found that two-thirds of the students in the six states involved were women. A 60 percent proportion of women, in fact, is not uncommon in telecourse enrollments.

Age Not surprisingly, educators are predicting greater educational and training demands from older adults as life expectancy continues to rise. These forecasts may prove to be accurate insofar as informal and leisure-time educational opportunities are concerned. But data currently available do not confirm such demands for formal education among older adults. The ITC/CPB survey shows only about 15 percent of telecourse students to be in the 40 plus range. The bulk of the enrollment—some 55 percent—is in the 18- to 29-year-old range.

These figures, it must be emphasized, derive from a study of men and women enrolled in college-credit courses that can be applied toward satisfying degree requirements. Data from other sources tend to bear them out. Available studies of distance learning programs, whether multimedia or correspondence based, show that the age of participants ranges from 20 to 40.

The ITC/CPB survey, however, does suggest that age is directly related to the nature of the subject matter. For example, 63 percent of those enrolled in an introductory computer course, ***The New Literacy*** of the CPB/Annenberg Collection, were over 30, with 30 percent between 40 and 59. Telecourses in core areas of common degree-directed curricula attract younger students whose general characteristics resemble those of on-campus student bodies. These telecourses, by the way, consistently enroll the largest numbers of students.



Ethnic Background The ITC/CPB survey, like other studies, reports almost 84 percent of the respondents to be Caucasian, with about 8 percent black and about 5 percent Hispanic. This is so even though some of the institutions surveyed—Miami-Dade Community College and the City Colleges of Chicago, for example—are urban community colleges with large on-campus minority enrollments.

Reasons for low minority participation range from basic learning skills deficiencies to the low group motivation and defeatism associated with discrimination and deprivation. One suspects, too, that minority underrepresentation in open and distance learning is also attributable to a notion, naturally strong among those accustomed to being outside the societal mainstream, that telecourses are something "second best." All this suggests that those who offer telecourses should make a special effort to advertise effectively in minority communities.

Educational Background It should be clear by now that telecourse students are far from marginal or unusual. However, some faculty members seem to feel that telecourses can be employed to serve poorly prepared students who cannot compete in the classroom. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

When college-credit courses were first offered on TV, in the late 1950s, there were adults lacking secondary school qualifications who thought these courses might be a quick and easy route to college-level study. They were soon disabused of this notion. Nowadays, only rarely do non-high-school graduates enroll in college-credit telecourses. Independent study presupposes the possession of study skills and self-discipline. The ITC/CPB study reports that only about 1.5 percent of the 700 surveyed were not high-school graduates.

Occupation Unfortunately, U.S. investigators, have not been so assiduous in seeking out information about the occupations of adult telecourse students. The ITC/CPB survey asked only how many hours per week respondents were employed—53 percent indicated 40 hours or more. Yet data gathered regularly by longtime users of telecourses warrant the inference that the occupational profile of telecourse students parallels that of men and women enrolled in university extension divisions and community college evening programs. Blue-collar occupations are underrepresented, with office, technical, and service occupations well represented. There is, in addition, a high proportion of young married women interested in starting careers when circumstances are propitious at home. There are, as well, older women—relieved of the responsibilities of caring for a home and children—in search of intellectual and aesthetic stimulation.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information we have, we can safely say that telecourse students are an ambitious lot. Generally speaking, they take telecourses for the college credit that will help them achieve their goals. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting discovered the extent of this tendency when it analyzed the enrollment figures for the telecourse built around Bronowski's landmark series, ***The Ascent of Man*** (Hoachlander, M., ***The Ascent of Man: A Multiple of Uses?***). You may be aware that this celebrated series, produced originally by the BBC for general audiences, was converted into a successful college-credit course which is still available for use on closed-circuit TV. Precise figures of how many enrolled in the telecourse for credit are not at hand, but it is likely that at least 100,000 were involved, watching PBS broadcasts in their homes or viewing videocassettes in classrooms or study centers.

Although its primary purpose may have been bringing the history of human culture to large audiences, the study disclosed that, in fact, credit enrollments were related directly to whatever catalog designation the course was assigned by a user college. When offered as a course that satisfies a definite curricular requirement—a required course in the humanities or the social sciences, say—credit enrollments are substantial. When designated as an elective satisfying no specific requirement, the course attracts few credit students.

What exactly is the significance of this discovery? It is simply that anyone willing to make the genuine effort needed to complete a credit telecourse, with its readings, correspondence work, and examinations, usually is motivated by credentialing goals.

Regular telecourse users will confirm this picture of the student. Once you are offering telecourses, if you collect data about your students, you will soon find that: they tend to be highly motivated, spurred on by career and occupational ambitions; they are concerned with conserving their time and energy; they reserve credit enrollments for telecourses that help them reach milestones on the road to credentials. Are they really unlike their younger counterparts studying full-time on campus?

Naturally, there is a lesson in this for you, if you are considering adopting telecourses. If credit enrollments are a factor in the decision, keep in mind the occupational and credentialing interests of prospective students as you select telecourses.

Telecourse Flexibility and Student Needs

Another attractive feature of the telecourse is its flexibility in use and its adaptability to student needs. Some students will watch video programs at home and study entirely on their own, with little or no live contact with instructors on campus. Others, to be successful, must maintain regular contacts with both instructors and fellow telecourse students.

On-campus uses of telecourses are varied and flexible. In fact, as you may have inferred by now, some colleges have only secondary interest in telecourses as ways of reaching out to off-campus students. Instead, they recognize in them opportunities for self-paced independent study on campus. Videocassette recordings are usable in libraries and learning centers at all hours of the day and night. Students complete the units of a course at their own pace and are permitted to submit correspondence exercises and take examinations whenever they are ready. Some colleges, too, have successful cooperative arrangements with public libraries whereby students can do self-paced study off the campus. These students report to public libraries close to their homes to view video programs or listen to audio programs. The library also stocks required and supplemental print materials.

The utilization pattern just described also allows colleges to give students a flexible course entry option. That is, not only can they finish a telecourse at their own pace, but also they are free to start a course at any time during the academic term. For that matter, "open entry/open exit" privileges need not be restricted to students who watch videocassettes on campus or in community centers. If you have access to a cable channel, and if you have enough airtime to repeat programs, you may want to consider restarting the sequence of programs at intervals during a term which will permit the greatest number of students to enroll.

Finally, telecourses, like films, can enrich classroom instruction and are easy for instructor and students to use. Video programs featuring documentaries, demonstrations, and interviews with authorities or prominent

public figures are invaluable instructional supplements. Further, videocassettes, like books, can be placed on reserve for the use of individual students. Video players are available in just about every library, are simple to operate, are hard to damage, and when used with earphones, do not disturb others in the room.

Of course, there are contractual and legal limits to the uses to which you can put telecourses when you lease them. Telecourse reuse rights are limited, as you will discover when you negotiate for their use. This should not surprise you. Your rights to reproduce the printed and other materials you buy for your libraries are also limited.

Telecourse Instructional Effectiveness: The Research

If you are assigned the task of persuading colleagues in your institution to try telecourses, expect them to raise questions about the teaching effectiveness of media-related instruction—telecourses, in particular. Every conscientious instructor or administrator is concerned with instructional standards and protecting students from the second-rate and the bogus.

As a matter of fact, the increasing use of the communications technologies in programs of continuing professional education has prompted studies by both state and national educational authorities. Unfortunately, faculty members who have read about these studies and investigations in the professional journals may, mistakenly, conclude that they cast doubt on the validity of telecommunications-based instruction.

One recent study deserves mention. Called Assessing Long Distance Learning via Telecommunications (Project ALLTEL), its purpose was to establish a set of principles to guide agencies evaluating distance learning programs. [The project was conducted by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO).] A secondary purpose was to protect consumers against inferior products, at a time when telecommunications media—that is, video and microcomputers—are being employed more and more widely in continuing education and training programs.

The project's overall approach was a constructive one. A major recommendation is that state accrediting authorities do everything they can to encourage telecommunications-based instruction. Investigators concluded, with admirable good sense, that an institution already awarded appropriate accreditation is in the best position to certify quality. Naturally, no reputable institution will present a telecourse for credit unless qualified members of its staff are satisfied that it is worthy of presentation. ALLTEL investigators also urged accrediting agencies to assess instructional methods in terms of outcomes as well as of process.

The methods of instruction represented by the telecourse have also been carefully studied. There has been thorough investigation of the effectiveness of the designs, uses of the media involved, and student performance. Some of the most significant research has been conducted by the Distance Education Research Group of the British Open University,

which has generated a steady flow of publications on issues of multimedia instruction, ranging from special instructional and counseling strategies to student support services.

It would be inappropriate to subject the readers of this guide to a thorough review of the research. But a useful introduction to the literature is ***Reaching New Students through New Technologies,*** a reader edited in 1983 by Leslie N. Purdy. And it should be noted that much attention has centered on video components of the system. Investigators agree that video is not the best medium for performing certain functions—presenting large quantities of information, for example, which books do much better and cheaper. There is also no disagreement about the affective force of video. By acting as a pacing mechanism, it motivates students to persist and, for the distance learner, it creates a sense of community.

In the United States, studies of telecourse student performance, utilization patterns, subject areas, and student characteristics have appeared with regularity since the 1960s. Although some are trivial and flawed by poor controls and an air of tendentiousness, taken as a whole, they confirm what a ***Time*** education writer concluded as long ago as 1967, "... proof of television's viability turns up in almost every study of its effectiveness" (October 20, 1967).

Nonetheless, if you are brand-new to telecourses, one question is probably uppermost in your mind. How well do telecourse students perform? Or to put the question another way, how well do telecourses "teach"?

Student Performance

During the 1960s and 1970s, when television had yet to prove itself as an instructional method, a number of investigators compared the performance of students in TV courses with that of their counterparts in equivalent courses in the classroom. Comparative studies of this sort have also been conducted in recent years. These investigations disclose no "significant difference" between the performance of telecourse students and that of classroom students of comparable age and educational background. The most carefully controlled of the studies matched adult telecourse students working at home with adult part-time students attending classes on campus. The content of the courses was about the same and common testing instruments were employed.

Brace yourself, however, if you present these results to faculty, who may not be impressed by them. For some inexplicable reason, faculty expect an unconventional approach to yield results spectacularly ***better*** than those achieved by classroom teaching.

These comparisons neither prove nor disprove the inherent superiority of one instructional mode over another. All they do is confirm that a well-motivated student can learn as well through one medium or method as another, provided the means chosen is employed well. Adult educators and mass communications specialists are also careful to point out that the effectiveness of television as a teaching tool can depend on the age of the students, their educational background, and the subject matter. (Some telecourse designers may take exception to the last of these factors.)

A final word about these studies: They measure student performance only as it is measured by end-of-term tests, assignments, and so forth. They tell us nothing about the affective and other less measurable qualities of telecourse components.

As for video: there is little room for disagreement over the instructional tasks that TV can best perform. To list only the most obvious: TV can magnify small objects; it brings the outside world directly to the student; it can be replayed to demonstrate processes or sequences as often as necessary. As Marshall McLuhan once wrote, TV has "created a taste for all experience in depth." It lets "the bard be heard."

On the other hand, as you evaluate the video portion of telecourses, keep in mind what video cannot do very well. Employing it merely to purvey information is ineffectual and uneconomical. It is not useful for graphic or other displays that demand wide eye span. Above all, noninteractive video—the kind we watch at home for entertainment—can easily make a learner passive and nonresponsive, unless it is integrated with other telecourse elements that encourage or demand activity and critical awareness.

Researchers have devoted considerable time and effort to the media themselves. Like the claims of all who investigate student performance, theirs are hedged and cautious. Yet, can anyone doubt that the visual elements of a telecourse—and audio elements, whenever present—make learning enjoyable and appealing?

3

Advantages of Telecourse Use

If this guide is achieving its purpose, by now you must be ready to agree that the telecourse is, indeed, a useful, effective, flexible, and well-tested instructional method for students studying both on and off campus. But you may have an uneasy feeling that there is more to it than meets the eye.

You are quite right. You cannot just adopt telecourses and offer them for credit on a local PBS station or cable channel. They demand considerable commitment of the user institution's resources. Above all, they demand time and careful attention.

Given all the other demands on staff time and the good chance that telecourse credit enrollments will be modest, why bother then? Will not the cost, the ensuing administrative bother, the problems of faculty reorientation, outweigh any possible advantages? If your institution is really serious about making telecourses a part of its instructional program, the answers to these questions can be provided by people in places where telecourses are being presented regularly. Most telecourse users are enthusiastic about their experience and eager to provide information that may help others establish their own programs. Ask them what benefits they are deriving from telecourses. If they are willing to schedule and offer telecourses term after term, what is it that makes the effort worthwhile? Some of the answers you will get are listed below.

Extension of Instructional Services

The one benefit most frequently mentioned is the extension of educational opportunities to more people than ever before. The late Professor McLuhan made us all aware that the world is now a global village, where information, both valuable and useless, can be shared in an instant. In the U.S., commencement orators often remind their audiences that the television set is more common in American homes than the bathtub.

For adult educators and elitists alike, the thought of a million people simultaneously watching a BBC Shakespeare play on PBS is awesome. In the four-hundred-year history of Shakespearean productions, how many people have sat in theaters to see the plays performed? How many people now watch ***Hamlet*** on television in a single evening?

Since we have become, without exaggeration, a TV-saturated culture, it is hard to imagine a college or university that would be unwilling to explore the potential of television for extending its educational and cultural services. Delivery channels abound. Cable systems, many of which offer colleges and universities free access, are springing up everywhere. The Federal Communications Commission is now awarding licenses for low-power tele-

vision stations that will provide even more broadcast capacity. Communications satellites now crowding outer space can deliver programming to individual homes without the bother and expense of cable.

We can now reach students who not too long ago were virtually unreachable. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, when instructional television was new, educators perceived of and advocated it largely as a way to serve adult men and women unable to attend classes because of schedules, responsibilities for home and children, physical incapacity. To their everlasting credit, the country's community colleges were among the first to recognize the medium as a vehicle they could use to realize their mission of serving everyone in their communities. This commitment, along with their open-door admissions policy and their low tuition fees, enabled them to introduce new kinds of students to higher education.

THE "NEW STUDENTS"

Data recently compiled by the PBS Adult Learning Service show that about 30 percent of telecourse viewers enrolled for credit in participating colleges are men and women drawn to postsecondary education by television. In fact, 60 percent say that they could never have enrolled if the course had not been available on TV. Likewise, 20 percent of the 700 telecourse students involved in the 1984 ITC/CPB survey were taking college courses for the first time. Presumably, many of them could not have taken a course otherwise.

The ITC/CPB survey also confirms what telecourse producers and designers learned earlier—that is, courses that lie outside the standard degree-directed general education areas (for example, ***The New Literacy,*** an Annenberg Project course produced by the Southern California Consortium for Community College Television) tap a new and previously untapped credit audience. They are not "deprived" men and women in the sense that in youth they were denied entry to higher education for one reason or another. Rather, they are adults, often beyond age 35, who feel they can improve themselves occupationally and enhance their chances for advancement through special training or further education. The ITC/CPB survey makes clear that, in addition to the students attracted to telecourses for credit, credentials, and degrees, busy adults with no interest whatever in traditional kinds of credentialing will find time to take telecourses that serve special needs.

One hesitates in a publication aimed at professional educators to bandy about slogans like "lifelong learning." Nonetheless, who can doubt that, with the current shift in our economy from heavy manufacturing to high technology and the service occupations—and with people living longer lives—mid-life career changes may become the norm rather than the exception. The lifelong learning cry is no longer a shibboleth.

If you attend professional meetings, you are aware that gazing into crystal balls has become a fashion with keynote speakers, particularly as we approach the end of a century. We have already noted that, in 1981, the National Home Study Council commissioned a group of correspondence educators, educational technologists, and informed laypersons to look ahead to the year 2001 and hazard educated guesses about the future

demand for distance educational opportunities. Not surprisingly, they agreed that the demand will be great as a result of almost certain increases in life expectancy and frequent occupational changes. Television and other telecommunications technologies, both video and computer-related, may be the only ways training and education will be made convenient and available for many adults in the 21st century.

We have been talking rather a lot about the "new" students attracted to telecourses. Who are they? What are they like?

Most colleges and universities employing television report that they are now enrolling adults unlike most of those who take classroom courses. They are men and women whose work schedules preclude regular classroom attendance. They include women tied down by small children and household responsibilities, retired persons, the physically handicapped, institutionalized individuals. There are even some adults who could, if they chose, take courses in the conventional way, but find the thought of a classroom a little threatening because they are unwilling to match their capacities against those of younger students.

Without telecourses, these "new" students would have to remain outside the formal higher-education structure. As the ITC/CPB survey suggests, their numbers may have been exaggerated in the past. But there is no doubt that there are a good many of them out there waiting to be served.

Futhermore, don't overlook the enrollment potential in your present on-campus part-time student body. The ITC/CPB survey disclosed that 50 percent of the students involved took telecourses because enrollment in an additional course on campus would have conflicted with work or other activities. Many such students welcome all opportunities to take extra course work without the necessity of added travel to the campus. In particular, if your college has access to cable TV, consider allowing some of your part-time students to add another course they can take at home without inconvenience.

Telecourses can serve still other special students with special needs. For example, perhaps you have wanted to do something for the inmates of a penal institution in your region, but have been unable to do so for one reason or another. You can now reach them with telecourses via open broadcast, cable TV or videocassettes.

Other noninstitutionalized groups can also be served by telecourses. Raymond J. Lewis's ***Meeting Learners' Needs Through Telecommunications*** also lists as special target audiences men and women in need of adult basic education. They include homebound handicapped people, employee groups, non-English-speaking citizens.

Every educational institution has its own mission. But most share an interest in serving groups, disadvantaged and advantaged, with special needs. Some universities now employ video technologies for professional continuing education—the health sciences, law, engineering, teaching. Strictly speaking, the method of instruction may not merit the designation "telecourse." As a rule, live classroom lectures and demonstrations are transmitted via closed circuit transmission, or in videocassette recordings, to industrial plants, hospitals, and other sites. Yet the extent of the service is a sign of the growing interest that innovators in both education and business have in telecommunications-based methods.

Other Side Effects and Benefits

We have been stressing thus far the advantages of reaching out to new students. But there are still other benefits, some unexpected. Telecourses have proved to be successful recruiters of students for conventional classrooms. A report heard frequently, particularly from experienced community college users, is that telecourses bring back to the classroom adults who have been out of school for some time. The explanation is simple. Once they are successful in independent telecourse study, adults overcome whatever qualms they may have had about competing with 18- or 22-year-olds in the regular classroom. More accurately, perhaps, the reason is that education, as every adult educator knows, only whets the appetite for more education.

Some colleges, too, make imaginative use of telecourses in their community adult-education program, exploiting, in particular, opportunities afforded by special series. For example, some report presenting ***The Long Search,*** a telecourse in comparative religion, in churches and library centers as an adult education series, with members of the clergy and religion scholars acting as discussion leaders. ***The Long Search,*** like ***The Ascent of Man,*** is a BBC-produced general audience series that was converted to a credit telecourse.

The community service a college or university can render through telecourses is not to be underestimated. Their value to the community is hard to measure, since it is not always translated into enrollments or tuition fees. But even if no one were to enroll for credit in, say, child development, health, or fine arts courses, the sponsoring institution would still be providing a valuable public service. In short, telecourses help a college establish a presence in its community. They bring the walls down.

There is yet another benefit that many users report, one often mentioned with bated breath for fear of wounding tender faculty sensibilities. Telecourses trigger professional development activity and valuable curriculum rethinking. British Open University courses, especially the foundation courses with their distinctive multidisciplinary approaches, have stimulated curriculum discussion and revision throughout the world. Some U.S. telecourses have had the same salutary effect. It appears that telecourse materials and instructional strategies enrich instruction on campus.

Cost

Is telecourse presentation cost-effective? This is an inevitable and frequent question, as any advocate of telecourse use knows.

Some proponents are rash enough to promise that a college can actually "make money" on telecourses—whatever this means. And there are always faculty members who argue eloquently that telecourses appeal to administrators simply because they can deliver a bigger educational "bang for a buck," to paraphrase a former U.S. Secretary of Defense.

Administrators rightfully inquire about cost-effectiveness. But like so

many questions, this one is difficult to answer. There is no simple answer, because sources of revenue and items of cost vary so much among institutions. You, of course, know the formula for calculating instructional expenses and other support costs in your college. All we can do is identify for you the items of cost in telecourse instruction.

The PBS Adult Learning Service distributes an information package which contains, among other things, a handy rundown called "Television Course Operation: Expenses Per Course." You should obtain a copy from the Adult Learning Service at PBS. It identifies major categories of cost: those for acquiring a telecourse, those for local student support, those for delivering and promoting the course.

The first category includes licensing or purchasing fees and the fees paid producers for each credit student enrolled. The second includes salaries for local support instructors, salaries for administrative and clerical support, and any other expenses that may be incurred in providing student support. The third category includes costs for recording and transmitting programs (if charged), costs of videotape stock needed for promotion, recording, and advertising.

Whoever starts out with the notion that telecourses are ways of making money is likely to be disappointed. A much more reasonable premise is that the costs of telecourse presentation will not significantly exceed those of conventional instruction. Indeed, the chances are good, given proper economies of scale, that costs will be about the same or slightly less. What is really attractive about telecourses from the cost standpoint is that once a break-even point has been reached, that is, when conventional instructional costs are matched, additional students can be served at only marginal cost.

Here is a bit of advice about estimating costs. You will know before you offer a course what it will cost to acquire it for your own use, or to share use as part of a consortium of institutions. Then add your best projection of what the costs will be for student support. Divide the sum of these costs by the average instructional cost for a student in an equivalent course taught in a conventional classroom. This will indicate how many students you must enroll in a telecourse for it to be cost-effective or to break even.

GOING IT ALONE OR SHARING THE RISK

Even though higher-education institutions traditionally are fiercely jealous of their autonomy, in recent years many have joined in resource-sharing ventures. Colleges discovered quickly, for example, that sophisticated and costly computer service can be shared, with reduced cost and no loss of efficiency. Nowadays, too, colleges and universities are utilizing TV-based and electronic-media-based instructional materials under arrangements to share them. They form consortia for the purpose.

As a matter of fact, some of the most widely utilized of the telecourses now available were designed and produced by consortia of institutions, with each partner investing a sum of money, assigning a faculty member as content advisor, and contributing the services of other specialists as

required. Thus, a course that is prohibitively expensive for an institution to produce on its own becomes feasible for a group pooling its resources.

Likewise, telecourses can be leased or purchased at reduced cost by a consortium. Like other vendors, telecourse distributors have special group rates for group buys or acquisitions. For example, PBS/ALS has special licensing fees for consortia of users which mean a lower-than-usual rate for the member of a consortium.

What does all this mean for you? It means, of course, that you can reduce the risk. If you fear that credit enrollments may be so modest as to make presentation disproportionately expensive, consider joining an already-existing telecommunications consortium in your area, or even forming one. Then you can take advantage of group licensing rates. In the states where community colleges have formed consortia, small colleges that could not afford to offer telecourses on their own now can afford to do so.

There are other advantages in consortium arrangements. In even the most loosely organized ones, valuable experiences are shared and bylaws information is exchanged. Consortia that operate under official charters even sponsor faculty orientation and in-service programs, conduct research into telecommunications uses, and screen and evaluate telecourses for their members. Consortia, too, are usually in a stronger position than are single institutions to negotiate for time and services with PBS or with the managers of commercial stations or cable TV systems.

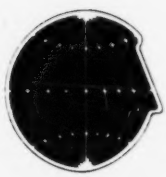
4

Getting a Telecourse to Its Audience

We have already indicated the means by which telecourses are "delivered" to audiences. But for readers not familiar with telecourse delivery, it may be helpful to set down in systematic fashion the commonly employed modes. Please note, however, that what follows is not intended as an exhaustive catalog of the telecommunications systems now in wide use. If you have access to systems other than open broadcast or cable, you would be well-advised to discuss the delivery means available and their technical capabilities with someone trained in telecommunications technologies.

Broadcast

Television and radio/audio modes can be classified most conveniently as either broadcast or nonbroadcast. Broadcast TV or radio is what we receive on sets in our homes. Since it reaches into virtually every home and requires no special equipment for reception, broadcast TV is the favorite way to deliver telecourses. It is also popular with the producers and designers of the expensively produced general education telecourses. Large audiences of casual viewers can watch programs broadcast on open air. No wonder educators have dreamed of "universities" and "colleges" of the air since the early days of radio.



When asked how they plan to view their telecourses, most credit students respond they will watch at home on open broadcast. Over 60 percent of the telecourse students polled in the ITC/CPB survey gave this answer. (Some, it must be remembered, confuse cable transmission with open broadcast.) The satellite-based PBS/Adult Learning Service, which transmits programs of its telecourses over PTV stations throughout the country, now makes it possible for hundreds of thousands of men and women to watch telecourses in the comfort and convenience of their own homes.

Unfortunately, broadcasters, either public or commercial, can spare only small amounts of time for the relatively narrow audiences for instructional programs, and then only at off-peak viewing hours. Airtime—or cable time—does not come free of charge. Some stations will bill you for the time. PTV stations do not bill for their time but may ask you to underwrite engineer and technician time. The cost of this service varies from locality to locality and is sometimes waived.

Although it is safe to assume that there will always be some open airtime for telecourses that appeal to broad audiences, any institution seriously interested in presenting degree-directed or articulated sequences of telecourses must look to the nonbroadcast modes for enough time.

However, in the near future low-power television broadcast and direct-broadcast satellites may be offering educational institutions additional broadcast options. The Federal Communications Commission has already approved a few licenses in rural areas. We can also anticipate that special education groups—medical and engineering education groups, for example—will be contracting for broadcast time on the satellite.

Nonbroadcast

Cable TV is already proving a boon to some instructional broadcasters. To cite only one example, New Jersey has established a statewide educational cable network (State of New Jersey Cable Television Network), which makes a schedule available to its colleges, universities, health-care organizations, and public service groups that want to present programs.

Farsighted and community-service-minded educational institutions should play an active part in negotiating for cable TV franchises. Cable systems currently being installed are multichannel. Despite the reluctance of the FCC to mandate such services, enlightened franchising authorities see to it that a channel or channels are reserved for educational institutions.

Given the socioeconomic characteristics of the men and women who enroll in telecourses, it is likely that many of them are among cable subscribers in wired communities. Close to 20 percent of those surveyed in the ITC/CPB study reported that they watch telecourses on cable.

ITFS

There are other nonbroadcast systems available to colleges and universities at modest cost. Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS) is prominent among them. ITFS is low-power line-of-sight transmission on high frequencies which can be received on home TV sets only with special equipment. Some colleges and universities and consortia employ the system to deliver specialized training and professional education to students viewing at work sites in engineering and architectural firms and in health-care institutions.

Some years ago a part of the high frequency spectrum was reserved for educational uses. Partly as a result of educators' shameful neglect of ITFS channels and partly because of the current strong trend toward governmental deregulation, the FCC has reallocated a part of the reserved bank to vendors of entertainment programs. Yet ITFS channels are still unlicensed in some communities. Recent FCC action allowing educational ITFS licensees to lease (that is, sell) as much as 75 percent of their channel capacity—ITFS systems are typically four-channel clusters—to vendors has renewed college and university interest in this "narrowcast" medium.

Indeed, extensive use can be anticipated when PBS's ITFS-based National Narrowcast Service (NNS) is in full operation. PBS has applied for ITFS channels across the country to create a service for delivering

specialized education and training programs to special-interest groups—occupational, professional, and otherwise. Local PTV stations will transmit the signals to locations equipped to receive them: community centers, industrial plants, health-care centers, and so forth.

What are the advantages of ITFS transmission? One, as noted, is great channel capacity. Another is the feasibility of targeting programs at small audiences with narrow interests watching in such specific locations as plants, offices, community centers. Finally, the system can be made interactive with relative ease. Audio/telephone connections allow for two-way conversation between originating and receiving sites.

It is understandable that graduate engineering and business management schools find ITFS a useful and cost-effective way of extending classroom instruction. As for college-level general education telecourses of the kinds we have been discussing, they make most sense for ITFS transmission when they can be fed into cable TV systems that go into homes. The PBS National Narrowcast Service will employ this method to deliver such telecourses in communities where ITFS and cable can be linked.

Recordings

Videocassettes are in such wide use for both home entertainment and instruction that little need be said about them. For some years now, prominent engineering schools have been employing them to present informal and formal graduate-level programs on company sites to graduate engineers and technicians. A consortium of community colleges in the Chicago area (Northern Illinois Learning Resources Cooperative) offers self-paced study in campus and community centers via telecourses on videocassettes. Some colleges—the City Colleges of Chicago, for example—conduct programs in cooperation with public libraries, in which adult students watch videocassettes in libraries and complete courses at their own pace.

Videocassettes are valuable adjuncts also to open-air broadcasts. Students sometimes miss broadcasts of programs or find it helpful to view programs for a second or third time. Usually, telecourse users make videocassette copies available for student use. (You will remember that we listed costs of videotape stock and recording among items to be budgeted.)

As videocassette players become less expensive and more popular as home entertainment centers, and videocassettes themselves become smaller in size and cheaper, enterprising continuing-education directors will explore the possibilities of lending videocassettes to students, much as libraries now lend book and audiovisual materials. This is not pie in the sky. In fact, Catonsville Community College in Maryland, a long-time telecourse user, began lending telecourse students videocassettes for home use during the 1984-1985 school year. For several years telecourse students at Waubonsee Community College, in the Chicago suburban area, have been checking videocassettes out of their school library for use on their home VCRs.

There is also strong interest in the videodisc, which looks much like an

ordinary phonograph record and has far more storage capacity than a videocassette. What intrigues educators most about the disc is that it permits direct interaction between learner and material. Computer-managed videodisc training programs have been developed that control students' progress by testing them and prescribing corrective action as required. Furthermore, on the disc, images can be retrieved easily and frames frozen. But interactive videodiscs are expensive to design and reproduce, and the equipment cannot be used to record programs for home TV sets.

An Afterthought on Audio

A further word about audiocassettes may be in order. They are necessary components of telecourses in certain fields—in foreign languages, for example, where they are indispensable in drilling students in sound systems and language patterns. The cassettes themselves are inexpensive. Since many students own audio players, they can be distributed for home use.

Don't underestimate the enrichment possibilities of the humble audiocassette. Telecourse support instructors should be encouraged to produce cassettes to review and critique correspondence exercises they return to students. The voice of the instructor adds a warm personal touch for a distance learner.

Audiocassettes can be used to supplement telecourse instruction in a number of other ways. They can be employed to explain and expand on materials in textbooks and study guides, to comment on or clarify the content of a video program, to add documentary enrichment through interviews, conversations, even lectures by local faculty or visitors on campus. Don't overlook them.

5

Acquiring a Telecourse

Thus far we have been sketching background, still trying to persuade you, if you have any doubt, that the telecourse is a distinctive and tried-and-true instructional method. Perhaps we have even told you more than you want to know.

But now, we want to explain how you and your colleagues can best go about determining whether telecourse adoption would help your institution realize some of its instructional and community service goals.

Needs Assessment

Just locating usable telecourses is one problem. Determining what kinds of courses you might consider is another. The first task an administrator responsible for telecourse planning must confront is needs assessment.

First of all, your overall purpose in offering telecourses plays a part in needs determination. Is it to add another cultural or intellectual resource to the community beyond the college? Is it to encourage adults to make use of telecourses as an alternative route to conventional academic credentialing? Is it to help meet the training or educational needs of certain segments of the community, such as business or professional groups? Is it a combination of these? Finally, (this may seem unrelated to the preceding but is really important in determining what courses to offer) how crucial to your program is the size of the credit enrollment?

These are just some of the questions anyone entrusted with planning a telecourse program must face. In short, what needs, individual and community, can telecourses help meet?

If you have the time and the resources, you can always conduct a formal needs assessment—or even an informal one. If the telecourses are to be offered through a continuing-education or extension division, a sample of students might be polled to determine if they would take courses on television and what kinds of courses they would prefer. The same questions might be asked of representative groups in the business and professional communities.

Or, a needs assessment can be done, as it so often is, "intuitively." This does not mean relying solely on guesswork and hunches. Other groups have conducted elaborate and expensive audience surveys. Why not make use of what they have discovered and apply it to your own constituency? We already know a good deal about the men and women who enroll in U.S. telecourses and in distance education projects in other parts of the world. A telecourse or telecourses can be selected on the basis of their demonstrated predilections for academic credentialing, self-improvement,

occupational advancement, leisure-time activities. Every community has people who share these tastes.

But the potential extent of each taste varies with the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of each community. A telecourse that satisfies a lower-division undergraduate requirement presented on a cable TV channel in an affluent suburban area will attract few, if any, adult credit students. Most of the residents are already college or university graduates. If they watch, they will watch for mere enjoyment, not to earn credit.

On the other hand, in a community where the highest level of educational achievement is high-school completion or some college work, such a course may very well attract a sizable credit enrollment. In this same area, however, a telecourse on the Vietnam War, no matter how well produced, will enroll only a few credit students if it is an elective that satisfies no significant curricular requirement.

People are willing to undergo the rigors of independent study if successful completion of the course helps them reach some milestone, satisfy some special purpose. We have already cited the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's study of the uses of ***The Ascent of Man.*** Wherever it was offered as an elective satisfying no particular curricular requirement, it attracted low credit enrollments.

In summary, ask yourself what you hope to accomplish by offering telecourses. Your answer will help you determine what kinds of courses to present. What we already know about telecourse students and their characteristics will also aid you in your choice.

In addition, it is also wise to have a notion of what your potential audience feels it needs and prefers. Therefore, give serious thought to requesting continuing education and adult education directors on campus to poll their students, if only informally. By the way, if your local PBS station has an educational or instructional director, he or she may be able to provide useful information about viewer preferences.

Getting your program of telecourses off to a fast start is important. Making shrewd decisions about what courses to schedule will get you off on the right foot.

Sources of Supply

The next step, finding sources of supply, is an easy one. (The assumption is that your institution does not produce its own telecourses, but wants to acquire them from outside sources.)

As with most institutional affairs, someone must be assigned the responsibility—a member of the administrative staff or a committee of faculty and staff—to locate suppliers. There are now available catalogs of telecourses, both video and audio. Some are published by producers and distributors; others are published by associations interested in disseminating information about telecourses and encouraging their use. Some catalogs list courses on the basis of production qualities; others are nonselective. The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges publishes a ***Catalog of Mass Media College Credit Courses.*** The Center for Learning and Telecommunications of the American Association of

a matter of TASTE

Higher Education produced a catalog, ***Telecourse Inventory 1984.*** Each of these catalogs contains over 100 entries, mostly video, with information on the content of courses and where they can be obtained. Information about production style is sometimes given. Courses are grouped according to subject matter—business and management, humanities and fine arts, social sciences and history, health science and health care, occupations, and so on.

Catalogs are one way of discovering who the producers of college-level courses are. Ads and articles in education journals are another. A valuable source of such information is the PBS Adult Learning Service. There are other good reasons for staying in touch with the Adult Learning Service aside from the obvious one of awarding credit for telecourses they air via a local PTV station. For one thing, ALS has an exclusive right to the first broadcast telecourses in the CPB/Annenberg Collection. For another, prior to the beginning of a school year, PBS schedules a closed-circuit national screening of telecourses submitted by producers for possible inclusion in the upcoming ALS offering. This affords administrators and faculty a splendid chance to sample the best of what is currently available. The teleconference can be viewed in PTV stations that participate in the Adult Learning Service. Announcements of this screening are sent out to colleges and universities well in advance of the event.

PBS/ALS, by the way, is not the only agency that schedules screenings. Regional telecommunications associations, notably the Central Educational Network (CEN) and the Southern Educational Communications Association (SECA), one headquartered in Chicago, the other in Memphis, sponsor yearly screenings and evaluations. Both agencies acquire materials on a group basis at special rates for member organizations.

Most telecourse producers and distributors attend national and regional education conferences. They usually have displays and booths at which you can preview their courses, ask their representatives about their products and services, and obtain informative descriptive materials, catalogs, and order forms. The Telecourse People, a national organization comprising several of the major nonprofit producers and distributors of telecourses, holds its own conference open to everyone interested in telecourses and their use. And, of course, telecourse producers and distributors do national mailings of brochures and newsletters from which you can learn about established telecourses, recent releases, and new offerings that will be available in the near future.

The Selection Process

An impression of a telecourse gained from watching a single video program, or a portion of a program, at a screening is hardly sufficient basis on which to recommend adoption of a particular course. Naturally, producers "showcase" their best efforts. Before buying, you will want to sample all the components. Someone, or some group on your campus, qualified to judge the subject matter and the instructional approach—a panel is preferable—should evaluate a representative sample of materials: video, print, and other essential components.

ENLISTING FACULTY HELP

You have now reached the stage where faculty must become actively involved. Indeed, successful telecourse users agree unanimously that the more actively faculty participate in all phases of telecourse selection, the stronger the resulting program will be.

At least one faculty member should be recruited to review the video programs and the accompanying print material of the courses that looked promising at the initial screening. If feasible, faculty or staff qualified to assess production quality and instructional design should be invited to help in the evaluation.

Although this may appear to be a difficult task, usually it is not. Often a memo or a telephone call to the chairperson of an appropriate academic department is enough. There are always instructors curious enough about innovative approaches to their subjects to volunteer their services. Besides, their evaluation will do more than expedite the course selection process. Whoever is responsible for managing the telecourse program has to recruit a support teacher or teachers, once course selection has been made. Involving instructors in the selection process is one method of recruitment.

The instructor or the panel of faculty and design specialists evaluating the materials must have assistance. There are details to be coordinated. Arrangements must be made for obtaining video programs selected for review. Programs and sample print materials must be requested from distributors. Panelists must be briefed on what information is needed to guide their decision for adoption or for nonadoption. It is usually wise to ask them to complete an evaluation form prepared in advance that contains questions and headings that will elicit needed information about content, equivalency with course or courses in the college catalog, level of difficulty, credit hours to be awarded for successful completion, and so on.

Finally—and this item cannot be overlooked—there is the matter of briefing panelists on the telecourse itself as an instructional system. Some, even after they have been briefed, will still let their assessments be swayed by the video programs alone, the most ***visible*** component and the one that makes the most immediate impact. They must be reminded that print is central to the method, and that each component must be judged in relation to what it contributes to the whole and how it aids the student as an independent learner. Furthermore, they must be reminded that telecourses are designed so that the various components can be modified to meet local needs.

If you are the administrator responsible for the telecourse program, you must be familiar with the telecourse as a learning system so that you can brief the panelists.

PRELIMINARY ESTIMATES

At this point, there is little that an administrator managing telecourses can do on his or her own except to estimate costs to be incurred so that a realistic budget can be projected in the event a telecourse is adopted.

From now on, the manager must rely on the willing cooperation of faculty. Without it, the program has little chance to make any real impact. In any event, let us assume that the administrator concerned has recruited evaluators willing to look at the course or courses that seemed so promising at the initial screening session, and that he has prepared a tentative budget. What next?

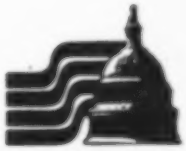
EVALUATION

The evaluator or panel of evaluators must decide what components they want to look at to get the flavor and feel of the entire telecourse. Naturally, first they will want to examine the study guide carefully. Then they will select several video programs for viewing. But which ones? The titles in a distributor's list or a telecourse catalog can usually guide evaluators in selecting samples.

Panelists should be requested to submit a brief written report. As indicated earlier, an evaluation form prepared by the administrator who will manage telecourse presentation is handy for this purpose and does not make unreasonable demands on the evaluators. We have already suggested the kinds of information needed, ranging from such nuts-and-bolts matters as where a telecourse fits in the approved curriculum and how many credit hours are to be awarded to critiques of the instructional approach and the course materials. Always, of course, evaluators should be encouraged to make whatever additional comments they think may be useful.

CONTENT ASSESSMENT

Faculty evaluators seldom find "errors" in telecourses, particularly ones that are widely used. As we have noted, telecourses are planned and designed by teams of qualified instructors, often advised by content experts from outside the producing institution or institutions employed as consultants. Indeed, as the CPB/Annenberg Collection grows, it seems likely that some telecourses will earn the seals of approval of professional and scholarly associations like the American Political Science Association, the Modern Language Association, the National Institute for Health, and others.



Evaluators may have reservations about the emphasis accorded certain topics or the manner of treating them. Keep in mind, however, that these misgivings often stem from misconceptions about the functions of various elements of the telecourse, particularly the video portion.

Evaluators' reports are most helpful in certifying the academic level of a course, and in dictating whether it is the equivalent in content and rigor of a similar course already approved within the institution, a course that can with reasonable modification be made a part of the approved curriculum, or a course for which there is no counterpart in the college curriculum.

All this information is necessary if the administrator in charge must later ask a standing curriculum committee to approve for credit a telecourse produced elsewhere.

The Curriculum Approval Process

As a rule, telecourses in the core general-education fields—the humanities, social sciences, history—present few, if any, problems. They are equivalents of courses offered on most campuses. Whether credit is awarded through regular academic divisions or through extension divisions and how much credit is granted are matters that vary with an institution and its policies. What is important for the credit student is that a telecourse must be clearly designated as part of the college's approved curriculum. Like other students, telecourse students are concerned with the transferability of credits.

Only the bravest, or rashest, of humankind presumes to offer advice on securing approval from college or university curriculum committees. However, in many institutions, a favorable report from an evaluation panel is enough for a telecourse to be adopted, if only on a trial basis. But procedures vary with institutions. Where a standing curriculum committee is involved, it must be briefed on the telecourse's design and on its adaptability to the user institution's distinctive needs and practices.

6

Managing the Telecourse

If you are a responsible administrator, once you have shepherded a telecourse through the approval process, you are well on your way, but still far from finished. There are still important and nitty-gritty details of planning and management.

Now everyone concerned must begin to think about delivering the telecourse to the students, and about providing all the support they need for success. As experienced telecourse users agree, this takes time, careful planning, and more than a little ingenuity. There are no short cuts. The administrator responsible is soon involved in such matters as negotiating for broadcast with open-air or cable services, coordinating instructional support services, arranging for the registration of students, and planning promotion and advertising.

This is not meant to frighten you off as a prospective telecourse user. It is meant only to warn you of the dangers of jumping precipitously into something that requires forethought and step-by-step coordination. Luckily, you have the experience of others to guide you.

Overall Organization

A cursory glance at Raymond Lewis's aforementioned ***Meeting Learners' Needs Through Telecommunications,*** a publication available from the American Association for Higher Education, discloses that there is no single way of managing telecourse projects. Every pattern reflects the organizational structures of the user institution and reveals whether telecourses and other nonconventional instructional activities are central or peripheral to institutional goals.

The organizational chart of a multicampus community college district may show a telecommunications center director at the same level as the campus head. Another institution may operate an "open college" as a separate administrative entity. This latter structure allows for self-determination and flexibility—for introducing variable student entry and exit, for example. Universities, highly departmentalized and segmented as they usually are, tend to administer and manage telecourses through special divisions, which sometimes are marginal to the mainstream of instruction.

Since the organizational structure, and consequently, the management of telecourse programs, are reflective of institutional goals, the priority of telecommunications-related instructional activities will rise in direct proportion to the importance of the goal of encouraging part-time study, which has high priority in all community (and some four-year) colleges.

But, in the final analysis, where telecourses fit in an organizational scheme is a function of top-level administrative commitment to them.

No matter where management responsibility lies, the experience of telecourse users indicates that certain elements are common to successful management systems. First, successful users try to adapt telecourses produced on the outside to their own institutional settings and needs. In effect, the adapted course becomes their own and bears their mark. Second, they provide the telecourse student, an independent learner who often has few or no campus contacts, the instructional support and timely flow of information he or she needs to succeed in—and enjoy—the experience. Third, they deliver the components of the telecourse to the student at convenient times and places.

The first two of these elements presuppose the cooperation of able and sympathetic faculty members. Administrators in institutions considering telecourse adoption always ask the same questions about these faculty. How are they recruited? What are their duties? How are they compensated?

Finding Faculty for Support Instruction

Since their duties differ from those of classroom teachers, instructors working with telecourse students are usually given special titles—***TV support instructor, telecourse campus instructor, instructor of record.*** What they are called is relatively unimportant, although it is prudent to avoid wounding professional egos. For the sake of this discussion, let us continue to call them support instructors.

RECRUITING THEM

Not surprisingly, there are no uniform recruitment practices. Some recruits are full-time faculty who provide telecourse support as part of their regular teaching programs. Others are part-time teachers, sometimes employed solely for the telecourse program. If local policy permits, interns, teaching assistants, graduate students, even nonteachers qualified in the subject can be employed.

Your institution may impose limitations on who can be recruited. For example, colleges that have collective bargaining agreements with faculties may be required by contractual provisions to offer such assignments to regular staff members before they can recruit part-timers. Other institutions may prefer, or may be required by union contracts, to assign telecourse support on an overload basis.

In any event, working within whatever limits prevail, responsible administrators must do their best to find the "right" support instructors. When the position is advertised, the duties should be specified clearly, thus discouraging applications from those not inclined to adapt themselves to a new kind of instructional role. It pays to solicit the recommendations of department chairmen for the likeliest candidates within the institution. Recruiters will want to make every effort to discover whatever they can about the interpersonal skills of prospective support instructors.

QUALIFICATIONS

Support instructors should be well-qualified in the subject matter of the telecourse. They should be attuned to the special problems and the "loneliness" of the distance learner—ideally, themselves at one time correspondence students or enrolled in some form of distance education. Support instructors should be adaptable and willing to take on functions different from those of the classroom teacher. Effective support instructors must be versatile, performing at times in familiar roles before groups of students in classrooms or auditoriums, while at other times serving as private tutors, counselors, and mentors in face-to-face or telephone interviews. When effective, they personalize and individualize an instructional mode which can all too easily become impersonal and mechanical.

People possessing these qualities may be in short supply. Unfortunately, they are seldom, if ever, rewarded for their efforts in the traditional academic ways, with promotions in rank, salary increases, or the acclaim of their peers. But there are people on every faculty with the right qualities who are willing to try something new.

DUTIES

We cannot emphasize enough that a support instructor's duties should be professional ones. If you have the responsibility of recruiting and assigning them, be sure that these duties are ones that can be performed well only by a professional. This means that there must be adequate backup clerical assistance for routine chores such as record keeping, scheduling activities, and so on. It is essential that support teachers see themselves as teachers in a somewhat novel and expanded role.

Their duties include, first and foremost, mastering the telecourse itself and its distinctive method. While the course is in progress, they must view all the video programs and review all the materials, so that they can anticipate students' problems and stand ready to help when called upon. In fact, if those who evaluated the telecourse prior to its actual adoption recommended that it be adapted or changed in any way, the support instructor must review the entire course well in advance of its preparation so that the suggested changes can be made in time.

Telecourse Adaptation

We have stressed the advisability of giving the leased telecourse a local institutional imprint. Inadvertently, we may have left some readers with the feeling that telecourse use brings more problems than benefits. But the extra effort will pay off.

PRELIMINARY REVIEW

We suggested that a telecourse be reviewed thoroughly in advance of its presentation if there is need for modification to meet local needs. Often

little or no modification is needed. But such a preliminary review is advisable. During the review, support instructors have an opportunity to put themselves in the student's position and identify trouble spots in the course likely to create difficulties. Whether or not there are such spots will determine, in large measure, what materials or learning activities are to be added, or how existing materials are to be modified. Even if there are no difficulties, instructors may still want to add or substitute materials to enrich student experience.

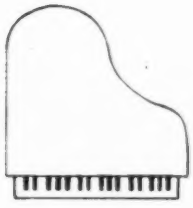
This kind of review undertaken well in advance of presentation, as suggested, entails extra expense. Consequently, only institutions that anticipate enrolling sizable numbers of credit students may be willing to absorb the costs of compensating instructors or assistants for this service. Remember, however, that such reviews need be done only once, and the cost averages out over repeated presentations of a telecourse.

If advance review is not feasible, support instructors will then have to follow the course right along with students. Certainly, they will view programs on videocassettes before they are aired, and from the very beginning become familiar with accompanying print materials. This will allow them some time to add to or substitute study materials, if deemed advisable.

NATURE OF ADAPTATIONS

Most institutions adapting telecourses do so without altering them significantly. When and if adaptations are made, the kind and extent depend on the resources, human and technological, available locally.

What kinds of changes are most common? In an academic field dominated by several texts, a support instructor may feel that a book other than that recommended or favored in the study guide is better suited to the capacities of local students. For study guides that are not keyed closely to particular texts or editions of texts, such changes can be made without too much trouble if enough time is allowed for ordering the substitute text.



Many support instructors, especially the more conscientious and energetic ones, like to add additional testing and review materials—exercises, self-scoring progress tests—even though some telecourse producers supply test and exercise banks along with course materials. They may add correspondence exercises, such as essays, book reports, and essay examinations. They may encourage students to participate in on-campus activities, arrange to have computer or laboratory facilities available for them, schedule museum and gallery tours, arrange for group attendance at concerts and lectures.

Some support instructors employ other media to supplement telecourse instruction and motivate students further. Facilities may exist on campus for the production of audiocassettes. Some institutions have video production facilities. Video programs in which support instructors or others comment on content, summarize, synthesize—and add new material—can be inserted in the broadcast schedule to provide supplemental instruction, that is, if cable or station managers are willing. Audiocassettes, inexpensive to produce, are particularly useful. As indicated earlier, support instructors' commentary, faculty lectures, and interviews can enrich a course greatly for the independent student.

A cautionary word is in order, however: Support instructors must avoid making unreasonable demands on their students. In short, they should not require more of them than they require of their classroom students. Their purpose is to enhance students' chances of success in a demanding instructional mode, not to discourage them.

Tutorial and Counseling Duties

In their role as tutors and counselors, support instructors impart a "human" quality to telecourse study. The autodidact may argue that all intelligent people need to become educated is a well-stocked library. But it must be conceded that ideas are meant to be exchanged. Thus, there is always the need for human interaction.

Institutions that are successful telecourse users add the dimension of interaction. Don't be disappointed, however, if some distance learners cannot, or choose not to, take advantage of all the interactive opportunities you may provide for them. They can succeed without them. The trick is to avoid the one extreme of seeming to ignore telecourse students, and the other of making inordinate demands on their time with trivial activities or plain busywork.

COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS

One of support instructors' most important tasks is to get essential information out to distance students when they need it. They may do this in writing, through personal contacts, or in other ways—for example, through on-the-air messages, if the telecourse is on open broadcast or cable.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Since contacts with students are infrequent, much essential information must be passed on in writing. When they register, students are supplied with a bulletin or guide which tells them all they need to know about course activities and their own status in the college. This may be an elaborate publication, if the college enrolls large numbers of students in a number of telecourses, or a simple, one-page document. It includes a calendar of activities: examination schedules, on-campus conference schedules, dates on which correspondence assignments are due. (If more than one telecourse is offered, conflicts in examination and conference schedules must be avoided, since some students may be enrolled in more than one course.) It also lists the support instructors' telephone conference hours and the numbers at which they can be reached.

The bulletin also tells students anything else they should know. It may include a directory of useful telephone numbers: the office of the telecourse administrator, the registrar's office, the college bookstore, the student records office. It can also be used to apprise students of college policies they should be acquainted with: withdrawal from courses; fee refunds; requests for transcripts, and so on.

During the term, some user institutions send follow-up bulletins to

their students to remind them of the final examination schedule or to pass on other information. (This bulletin is also a way of announcing and advertising telecourse offerings for the next term.) If local policy permits, it also is a way of preregistering students for the succeeding term by enclosing the appropriate form. In addition, it is an opportunity to gather information about such matters as student attitudes toward a telecourse and its components, their feeling about the local coordination of course activities and the broadcast schedules, and their preferences for future courses. A brief questionnaire can be included to collect such information.

In short, learn from merchandisers and retailers. Make the most of mailings.

Some long-term telecourse users publish newsletters. These carry items about course activities, as well as stories of happenings on campus that may be of interest. They also include human interest material, such as profiles of telecourse students and stories of their successes.

Newsletters require extensive staff support. In institutions enrolling large numbers of telecourse students, they are effective in disseminating information and in establishing a sense of community.

Periodically, support instructors send letters to their students. Some user institutions even insist that they send out a letter at the beginning of the term introducing themselves and welcoming the students. This is still another way of giving the distance student a sense of belonging. The administrators' guides that accompany some telecourses contain models of such letters.

There really is no limit to what can be done to stay in touch with students. The key, of course, is the conviction that telecourse students are just as important as other students.

PERSONAL CONTACT

Although there are some students who can work successfully in complete isolation, most appreciate some interpersonal contacts. User institutions have worked out effective ways of achieving this.

Some institutions require, while others only urge, telecourse students to attend orientation sessions for courses in which they are enrolled. Support instructors act as hosts at such sessions, which are usually held on campus. One purpose is to give each student a chance to meet a support instructor, so that he or she is more than a disembodied voice on the telephone or a signature at the bottom of a letter. It is also a chance to introduce students to the telecourse as an instructional system and describe its requirements. It is an opportunity to handle necessary housekeeping details. It is a chance, too, to make sure that a student has everything needed for the course—textbooks, study guide, and so on.

During this session, the support instructor or someone else—even a former telecourse student, if one can be recruited—can pass on tips about studying at a distance. No bit of advice is too elementary, and may range from suggestions on how to get the most from watching an instructional video program to how to schedule one's time for study. Also, this is another valuable opportunity to provide or repeat information students must have about institutional policies and student services, from library

privileges to counseling. Representatives of the library and counseling staffs should be invited to attend the meeting and describe the services available.

During the orientation session, support instructors usually explain how student performance will be evaluated. The more specific the information, the better. Distance students who are denied the luxury of chatting with an instructor after class or after a quiz want to know how much various exercises such as mid-term examinations, correspondence work, and so on, contribute to final grades.

Finally, it goes without saying that the purpose of an orientation session is not to discourage students. But even if your institution, or the division under whose auspices a telecourse is presented, has a policy of open admissions, the session is a valuable chance to talk to students—in private after the meeting, of course—who may feel their chances of success are slim because of deficient study skills or faulty academic background. If the support instructor thinks it wise, such a student can be advised to enroll in a remedial-level course before attempting a telecourse. Most credit telecourses now available are not really designed for people with basic-skills problems.

Successful telecourse users are unanimous in finding these student orientation sessions invaluable.

Scheduled on-campus group conferences are another staple of telecourse support services. However, most user institutions, find it advisable to keep attendance to the student's option. Required attendance can discourage credit enrollment since many people enroll in telecourses because they cannot spare the time for frequent visits to campus. Remember, a major purpose of telecourse presentation is to enable people to study in alternative ways. Some colleges have had to abort telecourse programs because they insisted on weekly or biweekly sessions on campus. On the other hand, do not deprive students of opportunities for personal interaction, if they choose to take advantage of them.

How many such conferences should be scheduled, and when, throughout the term? The number varies with the subject matter of the course. Telecourses that present skills—foreign languages, mathematics, occupational skills—must be supplemented by drill and review sessions, particularly in the absence of computer-based or other interactive devices. In such courses, support instructors may want to schedule on-campus meetings five or six times throughout a term.

In disciplines such as history, and social sciences, where mastery of "content" is a principal objective, only one or two on-campus conferences may be necessary. To encourage student attendance, some user institutions hold a conference shortly before or after examinations, when students are likely to have questions to ask. If these sessions are carefully planned, the word soon gets around and attendance increases. Students like enjoyable "extras," for example, a film or a guest expert to enrich a humanities or social science course. It helps, too, if an occasional conference is made a social affair, with refreshments available.

One doesn't normally think of examinations as opportunities for interpersonal exchanges. But they can be, if telecourse students are required to report to the campus for proctored final examinations. If support instruc-

tors are present during the sessions, students have further opportunities to seek help and guidance. (Different arrangements have to be made for handicapped or institutionalized students, of course, with nurses, clergymen, social workers, or other responsible people administering examinations to the physically handicapped, and correctional education officers supervising exams in penal institutions.)

Students feel secure when they know that they can reach support instructors on the telephone for help, even though relatively few may avail themselves of the opportunity. Most instructors prefer to schedule telephone conference hours several times each week. These hours, as we noted earlier, are listed in the bulletin distributed to credit students at the start of a term. When scheduling telephone conferences, instructors should keep in mind that some students are not free to call during normal business hours. Therefore, they should try to make themselves available during both daytime and early evening hours, or on Saturday mornings.

Institutions enrolling large numbers of students maintain telephone hot lines and answering services. Students are invited to call at any time and leave a message for a support instructor to call back.

Support instructors in most user institutions report that telephone traffic is light. Typically, the questions asked have to do with course business, rather than with ideas or issues raised in video programs or study materials. This is not really cause for disappointment or disillusionment. Rather, it is further evidence of the efficacy of the telecourse as a self-contained instructional method.

Scheduled telephone conference hours by no means exhaust the potential of the telephone for useful give-and-take. Some user institutions encourage telephone calls immediately following broadcasts to stimulate exchanges about ideas or opinions expressed in the program.

Some conscientious support instructors find that the telephone is a way to reduce course attrition. They take it upon themselves to telephone students from whom they have heard nothing for a while, or from whom required correspondence assignments have not been forthcoming. This is dedication beyond and above the call of duty. But it seems to pay off. It is a sign that somebody cares.

OTHER MEDIATED CONTACTS

Earlier we mentioned locally produced video and audio programs as means of adapting and supplementing telecourses. Such programs can be made interactive through telephone connections. A support instructor in the radio or TV studio responds to questions telephoned in during a live broadcast. Naturally, all this requires additional planning and means additional expense, although telephone lines are not prohibitively expensive. If enrollments are sizable enough to warrant the expense and effort, this type of contact is well worth thinking about.

COMPUTER LINKS

If you are considering telecourse use for the first time, it is unlikely that you are eager to hear about how computers can be employed for tutoring,

counseling, student record keeping, and exchange of information. Yet you may be interested in knowing what others are doing.

Distance and adult educators are intrigued by the potential of microcomputers, or personal computers, for individualizing training and distance education. These computers become less expensive every year. Training and educational uses of personal computers have been publicized in the general press and in educational and professional journals. Personal computers can now interact with other computers over telephone lines through the medium of an inexpensive "modem." The complicated protocol that formerly frightened so many would-be computer users has been eliminated.

The CPB/Annenberg Project, as already mentioned, has funded a demonstration project to assess the effectiveness of the so-called "Electronic Mailbox" in supplementing telecourse instruction. Students will access a computer on a university campus via their personal computers for purposes of testing and advisement.

This is not just mere stargazing by professional futurists. We mentioned earlier that Miami-Dade Community College has been using its mainframe campus computer to help manage the progress of students enrolled in telecourses through a system called RSVP. The computer evaluates student assignments, prescribes corrective action, keeps records, and sends students course information.

You may not be ready for this yet. But computer-assisted or computer-managed tutorials and counseling may well be an everyday part of distance teaching before that much-invoked year 2001 rolls around.

Yet no matter how sophisticated or available the media, the support instructors will remain the key element. You can readily appreciate that recruiting the right people for the job is prerequisite to successful telecourse utilization. Their role combines the old and the new, the familiar and the unfamiliar. When they are effective, they personalize and individualize an instructional system which many people still distrust as impersonal.

Support Instructor Compensation

By now, any administrator reading this must be wondering if any pattern of compensation for support instructors has been established or agreed upon. The answer is no. Anyone who polls user institutions on how they determine rates of compensation for telecourse support instructors soon discovers that there is no single pattern.

For one thing, institutional policies vary greatly. In some colleges, an administrator has considerable leeway in assigning support teachers and negotiating with them for compensation. In others, especially where collective bargaining agreements exist, the administrator has less discretion.

Most users arrive at some formula or rule of thumb for compensation after some experience with telecourse instruction. Some have developed elaborate formulas. The support instructor is assigned a certain number of students and a set of responsibilities for a base rate. Additional students and services bring him or her added compensation on a pro rata basis.

Other institutions prefer to work within looser arrangements, without the sometimes doubtful benefit of a rate card.

In any event, administrators and support instructors must make a realistic assessment of the nature of the professional duties involved and the time demanded. Size of enrollments is obviously a key factor. The amount of correspondence work is another. In some situations, equivalencies with the duties of part-time on-campus instructors can be worked out.

What was said earlier bears repetition here. Whenever possible, support instructors should be spared time-consuming chores that can be performed by clerical personnel (such tasks as grading mechanically scored quizzes, routine mailings, record keeping). A certain amount of clerical work is unavoidable in all teaching. But telecourse support instruction should be made a genuinely professional teaching activity.

We have a final word of advice to the administrator: If you deem it advisable, or if local policy requires, that you assign full-time faculty to support instruction, avoid seeming tightfisted when discussing compensation. Even if you feel the instructor will be overpaid, considering probable enrollments, it is better to err on the side of generosity.

7

The Administrator and Telecourse Management

The unconcealed purpose of this guide is to encourage college administrators to consider telecourse adoption. Nonetheless, we discourage anyone who is thinking of taking a quick fling at telecourse instruction. Without long-term and careful planning, telecourses soon become unhappy memories.

Planning Ahead

Planning telecourse schedules is not quite like planning regular academic calendars. A telecourse schedule, once publicized and arranged, does not lend itself easily to change. In fact, tensions between public broadcasters and educators arise most frequently from the havoc that is wrought when ***The Shakespeare Plays*** are rescheduled for March rather than for February, as was originally announced in the school's promotional flyers.

Setting up channels of communication for distance students requires time, and attention to logistical and clerical detail. We have already listed and described the tasks involved, from negotiating for program time with broadcast and cable outlets to clearing dates and places for examinations and student conferences. Much of this planning and coordination is balanced precariously on the capabilities and vagaries of the U.S. Postal Service.

As a rule of thumb, telecourse users plan at least a full year in advance. For institutions obtaining telecourses directly from their producers, this poses no problem. There should also be no problem for those participating in the Adult Learning Service. ALS courses are now previewed and selected nine or ten months in advance of presentation.

This guide has had much to say about adapting courses for local uses. Other less exciting, but indispensable, elements in the adoption process also make a year's lead time necessary. Books and supplies needed by students must be ordered early and be on hand well before the beginning of a term. Indeed, no single problem can plague those administering telecourse programs more than an inability to get study materials to distance students on time. It would be a great annoyance for a classroom teacher not to be able to provide students with supplies at the start of the term. For a telecourse instructor, it is pure disaster.

Lead time is required also for arranging broadcast schedules. If your college or university is a member of a consortium or association that acquired the rights to telecourses, it is relieved of much of this responsibil-

ity. But no matter who is responsible, considerable time is needed for negotiation and discussion. If transmission fees are to be paid, they must be determined. Other costs must also be determined or negotiated. If a station is to record videocassettes for a user institution, the cost of this service must be worked out.

Further, if you plan to use the local PBS station for broadcasting, you should establish ongoing contacts with the adult-education liaison person at the station. This takes time, and is necessary if you are to be made aware of screenings, teleconferences, and the availability of promotional and preview materials in time to arrange for their use in your curriculum.

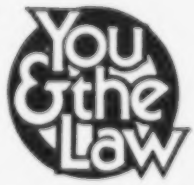
ENROLLING STUDENTS

Some careful thought and planning must also be devoted to the important matters of enrolling students and promoting the courses. Student registration can be an excruciating process, as everyone knows. Many of us remember it as an ordeal of standing in long lines and filling out endless forms. Nowadays, the computer has taken some of the sting out of the process, but has not yet solved the problem of queuing up and waiting.

Most institutions try to simplify registration for their students. Cumbersome procedures discourage registrations, especially by adults. Some find it a frightening and incomprehensible procedure.

Institutions with open admissions policies are at an advantage. Thus, most community college telecourse users permit registration by mail. Universities offering telecourses through adult-education extension divisions may also permit mail-in registration. The student need only fill out a form in the flyer advertising the courses and return it with the required fees.

Since most telecourse students are part-time students who take only one or two courses, informal registration is adequate. Once the student decides to transfer to an on-campus division, or once he has earned a semester's worth of credits via telecourses, he can always be requested to meet with an academic advisor before enrolling for further credit.



The flyers or brochures containing the mail-in registration forms must give a prospective student all the information he or she must have about fees and course supplies. If texts or other materials are to be ordered from the telecourse office or the college bookstore, the exact amount required, including postage if ordered by mail, must be specified. If books or other materials are to be ordered directly from distributors or other agencies, the student must be given all necessary information. Not until the enrollment form and fees are received is the student officially enrolled. He or she is then sent whatever further information is needed to start the course.

Some institutions enroll students over the telephone, with an understanding that no enrollment is official until fees have been paid. The student who calls is sent whatever registration forms are to be completed. Once the forms have been returned and fees paid, study materials and information about procedures are mailed out.

Telecourse students, like other students, can enroll in person. Since more and more telecourse students enroll concurrently in conventional classes, some institutions schedule regular on-campus enrollments for telecourses.

Sometimes students are permitted to enroll in person at off-campus

sites. An institution presenting a telecourse that appeals to special employee groups—for example, a course in computer science or management—may arrange for its employees to enroll at work sites.

To sum up, as with other aspects of telecourse management, flexibility is the magic word. Telecourses appeal to special kinds of students only if access is easy and nonthreatening.

Promotion

Some administrators seem to assume that prospective students will hear about telecourses much as they hear about other courses. There is a good deal of truth to this, surprising though it may seem.

The 1984 ITC/CPB survey, referred to several times in this guide, discovered that a high percentage of students find out about telecourses through regular on-campus channels, that is, the term schedule of courses. In fact, 60 percent say they heard about telecourses this way.

The message is clear: Telecourses should be displayed prominently in on-campus course schedules so that they are brought to the attention of on-campus students. The 60 percent who say they came to telecourses through listings in semester course schedules match up with the 62 percent of students in the survey who actually enrolled in telecourses and on-campus courses concurrently.

The remaining 40 percent heard about telecourses in other ways: through special announcements on radio and TV, through special TV brochures, through advertisements in the newspapers, by word of mouth from friends, from faculty counselors. In this 40 percent are found the new kinds of students telecourses can reach. In institutions other than community colleges (a large proportion of respondents in the ITC/CPB survey were in community colleges), this group may very well prove to form a higher percentage of the enrollment. Therefore, four-year colleges and universities would be well-advised to explore "other ways" of promoting telecourses.

Many colleges have public relations staffs who get information out to the press and the media. But if your institution has no special promotional or public relations office, you can still do a lot on your own. Most telecourse producers and distributors provide press kits containing releases about telecourses scheduled for broadcast. You can reproduce them. If you have the funds, try an advertisement in the TV supplement of a local newspaper. If courses will be on cable, ask the cable operator to run spot announcements or include a notice in program guides sent to subscribers. You might even request that an announcement be enclosed in billings to customers.

These efforts may not result in significant numbers of credit students but they will alert the general viewing audience and help you perform a community service.

Special attention should be given to preparing a telecourse brochure every term, as well as to compiling a mailing list for it. Your press releases, media spot announcements, and advertisements should all invite requests

for copies. Copies should also be mailed to people enrolled, or recently enrolled, in your continuing education or adult-education division. Send multiple copies to local public libraries, municipal, state, and federal government offices, businesses, and industries. Enclose a letter asking that these brochures be displayed and made available to employees. If a telecourse of interest to a special occupational group is to be offered, make contact with training officers in the group.

This brochure is more than a promotional document. It is a way you can actually enroll students easily and quickly. It should contain a mail-in registration form.

By the way, you may be wondering about, or even be perplexed by, our having repeatedly mentioned word-of-mouth promotion. Nonetheless, you will find it to be effective. But it starts only after you have offered telecourses for a while and have a satisfied clientele.

Then too, don't overlook media promotions your institution may be able to produce on its own. Some telecourse users find a "Telecourse Preview" a good way to generate interest at the start of a term. A half-hour TV program, hosted by the telecourse coordinator or someone experienced in TV, featuring clips of telecourses to be presented, introducing support instructors, and giving registration and other essential information, can be produced at modest cost. Radio programs cost even less and can also be effective recruiters, even without the visual element.

Once again, give yourself time for promotion. A little imagination helps too.

8

Commitment: The Yeast in the Mixture

This final section is not a peroration. Instead, it is intended to call attention to something that has been implicit in all that has been said about successful telecourse utilization: The degree of success is directly related to the degree of top-level administrative commitment within your institution.

Without signs of genuine commitment from the top, a telecourse program will strike faculty and staff as little more than a ceremonial gesture in the direction of the innovative, a matter of concern only to audiovisual enthusiasts on campus. With the genuine administrative support always apparent in successful user institutions, telecourses can make a difference. They can reach out to new kinds of students, previously unserved, and bring challenging independent study opportunities to students enrolled in conventional classes. They can add a whole new dimension of community service.

Drawing upon the experience of those with telecourse expertise, we have outlined certain preconditions for success. These conditions can be created only if those authorized to commit institutional resources make a wholehearted commitment.

After having read this, whether or not you, or whoever in your institution is responsible for the decision, choose to use telecourses, we hope that you have come away with an appreciation for the telecourse as a distinctive and valid alternative to conventional college-level study. If you decide to adopt telecourses, we trust that you will profit by the experience of those who have found that telecourses have made an important contribution to their instructional programs.

Of course, a telecourse and a classroom course are different ***educational*** experiences. But there can be no doubt that they can be of equal value as ***learning*** experiences. In some ways, telecourses may be even richer.

If you decide to try telecourses, the best of luck!

Acronyms

ALLTEL	Assessing Long Distance Learning via Telecommunications
ALS	*See* PBS/ALS
BOU	British Open University
CEN	Central Educational Network
CIC	Committee on Institutional Cooperation
COPA	Council on Postsecondary Accreditation
CPB	Corporation for Public Broadcasting
EEC	Eastern Educational Consortium
ITC	Instructional Telecommunications Consortium
ITFS	Instructional Television Fixed Service
NNS	National Narrowcast Service
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service
PBS/ALS	Public Broadcasting Service's Adult Learning Service
PTV	Public Television
RSVP	Response System with Variable Prescriptions
SECA	Southern Educational Communications Association
SHEEO	State Higher Education Executive Officers